

# DOINGS AND DEALINGS







DOINGS AND DEALINGS

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HUNTERSEARE,  
WEST RUNTON,  
NORFOLK.  
WEST RUNTON 14.

*Over the hill and the glen adown  
The road lies long for their footing slow,  
Who travel it, bound to buy and sell,  
To lilt and laugh, and to bear and tell,  
As ever their folk would years ago,  
Doing and dealing in yonder Town.*

*So the skies bend as in days of old  
O'er bargains struck, and o'er stories told.*

*Yet at last, when rays fall slanted low,  
And the streets grow lone, and talk is still,  
Adown the glen and over the hill  
On his homeward way turns many a one,  
Who in his heart, if he had his will,  
The wild wish yielded by Fate to none,  
Aught that is owned or bought or sold  
In the world's width of the sunlight's gold,  
Would give you for just the look and word  
That nevermore shall be seen or heard,  
Till doings and dealings all are done.*



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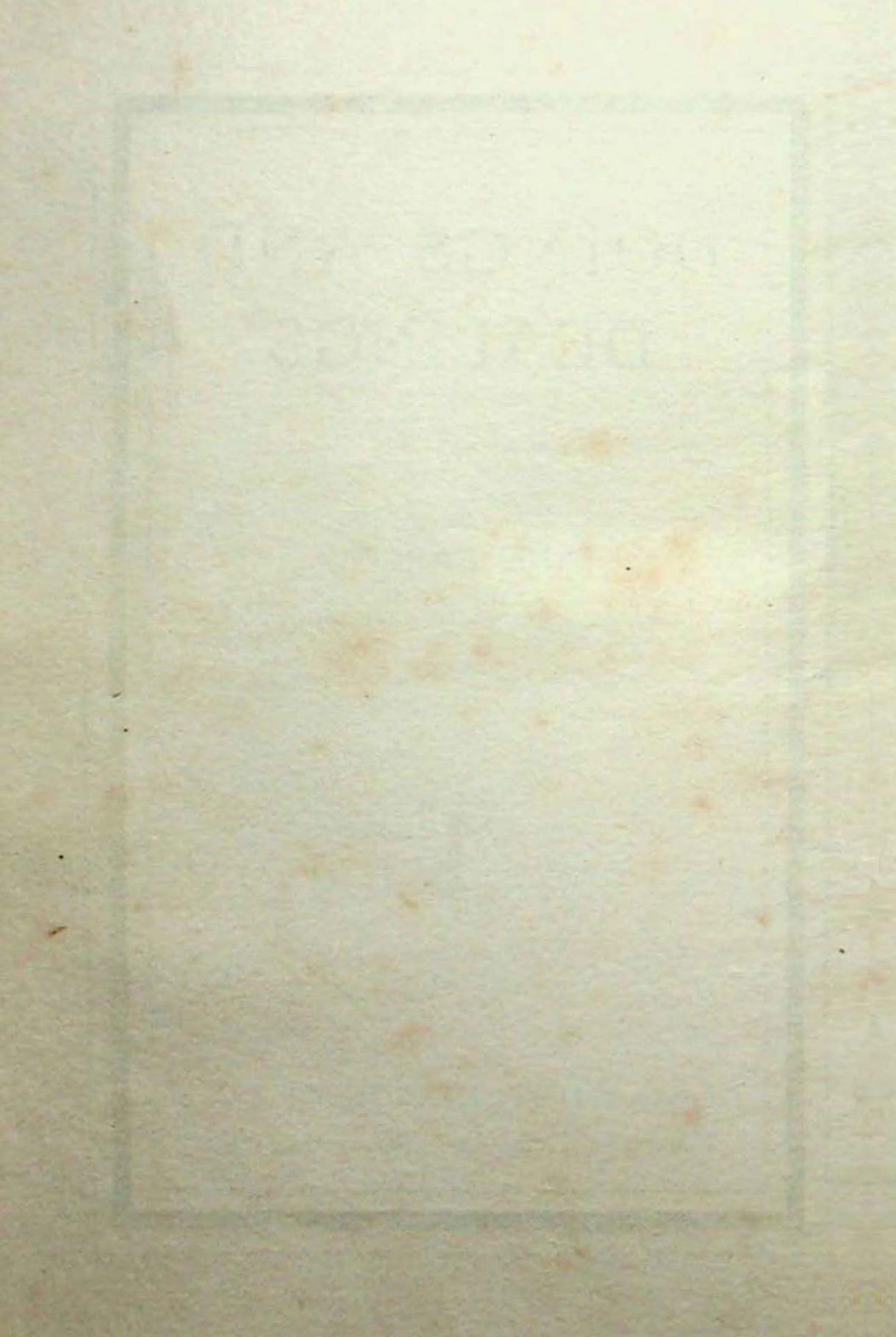
BY  
JANE BARLOW

Author of  
"Bogland Studies," and "Irish Neighbours," etc.



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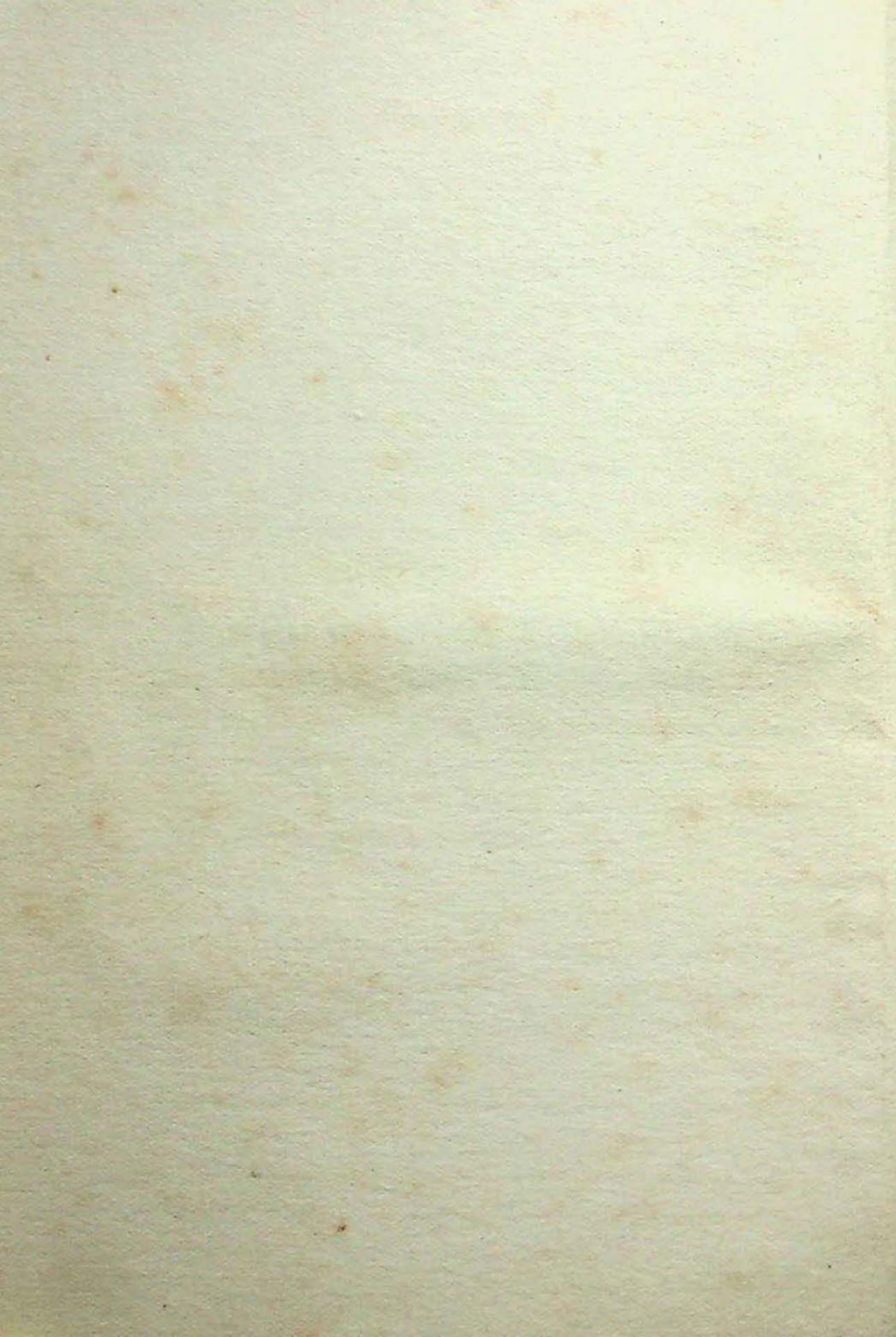






“Ἄιαί, Θηρίμαχος δὲ παρὰ δρυὶ τὸν μαχρὸν εὔδει  
ὑπνον· ἐχοιμήθη δ' ἐχ πυρὸς οὐρανίου.”







## *Nemesis in a Garden*

### I

THE large walled-in garden of the old Queen Anne manor-house had seen worse days, for at one time it had fallen into the hands of farming people, and they, according to the habit of folk whose labours lie among the wider fields, had despised gardening work, much as a painter in fresco might despise the production of a miniature. But now that it was once more in the possession of the McNeills, its beds and borders were filled again with flowers and fruit. On this late August afternoon they were brilliant with all seasonable blossoms, and in the south-west angle of the sun-smitten wall a lavender hedge made a glowing lilac mist, whence the honeyed spikes beckoned to many humming bees and noiseless butterflies.

Out of the house, through the neighbouring porch-door, ran a maidservant, in pink



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and white cap and gown, rather obviously more youthful than her forty-odd years. Her sharp-featured face wore the incipiently prying expression of a would-be sightseer, as she darted across the corner of the garden, making straight for the boarded gate in the right-hand wall. But before she got there it was opened from the other side by a man of about her own age, who rapidly locked it and put the key in his pocket. It was a pocket in a new-looking grey tweed suit, with a black arm-band.

"Oh, it's you, Fergus," she said, as they met. "And where at all were you? Not but what I know well enough."

"You do, bedad!" said Fergus. "And where's yourself off to? Not but what I know well enough, Theresa Finucane."

"Then it's more than meself you know," said Theresa, "for bothered I'd be to say how I'd get anywheres, with you fooling there locking up the gate. Come, give me out the key: a joke's a joke," she said, extending her hand, with a forced smile.

"A great journey you were going, to be sure," Fergus said sarcastically, "in them shallow slippers, with a little rag of a pin-cushion cover on your bare head. . . . Gaping at the



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people coming back from the poor girl's burying, that's what you'd be after."

"And what odds is that to you, supposing I was itself?" said Theresa. "Is it too good they are to be looked at?"

"That's according to who looks at them be-like. So, anyway, I have the gate safe," said Fergus.

"Hand me the key now," Theresa commanded peremptorily. Then, as he remained imperturbably deaf: "Of all the contrary gomerals! I wonder you would be parading yourself here, then, and you after making a show of yourself coming out of this place with a black wad plastered on to your fool's sleeve. If the mistress saw you now——"

"A decenter show I am, whoever sees me," said Fergus, "than them that are after choosing the day of poor Mrs. Gerald's burying to be flourishing about in colours again. I got a sight of the Mistress this morning, above at her window, with a gown on her like one of them streaky carnations; and ould and bitter she looked, by the same token. A deal better the mourning suited her, if that was all, let alone the young daughter-in-law lying dead."

"Musha, long life to you! Yourself and



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your talk of Mrs. Gerald—cock her up ! ” said Theresa. “ Is it streeling about dressed up like the crows in the fields you’d have us be till the end of our days for the sake of Andy Flynn the ploughman’s daughter ? Why didn’t you ask me, and I could have given you some ould crapey weepers to be wisping about your hat, the way you might frighten the childer you’d meet on the road ? ”

“ A fool I’d be, and a fine one, to ask anything of you, unless it was ill-nature and impidence,” said Fergus, “ and plenty of that I get without the asking.”

“ Well to be sure ! I’m glad I’ve no call to go to you for a character,” Theresa said with defiant bitterness ; but added in a more plaintive tone : “ For all there’s some in it had a right to be keeping a better recollection of good turns I done them ever since they come to the place.”

“ There’s a one, let me tell you,” Fergus said, with no signs of being mollified, “ longer in it than either you or me, that you done a very bad turn to entirely.”

“ And who at all ? ” said Theresa.

“ Herself inside there—the Mistress,” Fergus replied promptly.



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"And when was it ever I done a bad turn against the Mistress? When now?—you and your lies," Theresa demanded furiously, and continued the question in her angry glare as she waited for the answer.

"When stirring her up you 'were against poor Master Gerald, and his getting married," said Fergus, "till driven he was out of the place, and got his death off away in Canada, where the ink itself froze in the pen with the unnatural cold, and they writing home the news."

"'Tis the ignorant talk you have out of you. Is there no shame in you," stormed Theresa, "to be standing there and letting on I stirred her up, that might as well offer to try stir up a big wind, with the blast of it sweeping down all before it, like a stone wall run mad across the country-side?"

"Oh, divil a big wind was in it, Theresa Finucane," said Fergus; "but just a raging woman, that you could aisy enough set in worse tantrums with giving abuse to the Flynns, and poor Molly herself; and that same you done. And a bad turn it was to the Mistress."

"Sorra a bit of it," said Theresa. "'Twas



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all one whether she raged or no, and a sort of satisfaction to her mind."

"Belike you'd call it all one," said Fergus, "if Master Gerald was alive this day, the way he might be, only for her driving him out of his own place to get his death with hardship and cold."

"I declare now," Theresa averred, "I wouldn't say but the Mistress might call it all one. For what good could she get of him, and he saddled with a wife she couldn't abide the very thoughts of—— But, to be sure, you were thinking he'd be shut of her now, as things happint."

"Troth and I was not," said Fergus. "Long sorry I'd be to think but that the both of them were apt to get their health finely if they stopped in this country. Sure I'm not saying she was the fit wife for him by any manner of means——"

"That's a wonderful thing, now, you're after finding out!" Theresa interpolated ironically.

"But he might do worse—plenty worse," Fergus continued; and was moved by the interruption to add: "For a good girl she was, and as pretty a little creature——"

"Much talk you had about the pretty good-



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ness of her while she was to the fore," Theresa broke in again. "Whethen now, when yourself had such a great opinion of her, and thought that bad of me saying a word against her, I wonder there was never a sound of you speaking up to the Mistress for her, no more than if you had a black knot tied on your tongue."

"If I had, I'd a right to keep it there," said Fergus. "What call should I have to be discouraging the Mistress, that never made free with me so far as to mention their names. That the slugs was destroying the strawberries, and how finely the sweetpea looked—they's the only sort of remarks I mind her passing to me in all the seven year I'm about the place. 'Tis a different matter with you, Theresa."

"That's true for you, Fergus, at all events," Theresa admitted. "The double of seven year I'm in it, and more, for I come when poor Master Arthur was a baby, and from her own people I come, the Rowans of Rowan Castle. Little any of us thought then of the time coming when she'd be burying the Master and three childer in the one week."

"A bad job it was on her, sure enough," said Fergus. "She'd be never apt to get the



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same look off anything in the world's width again."

"You may say that," Theresa said, and launched forth on a strong-flowing stream of reminiscences. "In the early spring it happened, before the Michaelmas you come. 'Deed now I remember that night the same as if the sun there was just after rising up out of the black of it. The three of them lying bad with the diphthery in their throats, and little Miss Elsie like as if she would be choking every minyit. So the poor master, that was wrapped up in her entirely, took off through the blinding dark, galloping mad for the Doctor; and if he did, his mare put her foot in a rabbit-hole on the lawn, and broke both their necks."

"The Divil's own luck was in it," said Fergus. "A body wouldn't aisy forget the like."

"And the three childer every one of them dead again the next evening: Master Arthur, and Master Jim, and Miss Elsie herself," Theresa continued. "I give you me word, Fergus, that on the day of the burying, when I seen all the little coffins carried out, after their father's, and each one littler than the last, the notion come in me mind that the whole



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of it was some comical thing contrived by the Divil for his own diversion ; and before I knew what I was doing a screech of a laugh I let. By good luck there was nobody near to be hearing me, or it's demented they'd say I was. And yourself now's the first I ever told of it, man or mortal, whatever bewitched me."

"An ugly thing it is, a laugh turned wrong side out, so to speak," said Fergus. "And I wouldn't wonder aither if the Ould Lad himself was at the bottom of a deal of the laughing in this world, suppose he let's the crying alone. . . . There was plenty of that in it here to-day——"

But Theresa would not hear about any such sorrowing, and interrupted with the continuation of her old unhappy reminiscences : "So there was the Mistress left with only the youngest and the eldest of them all, Miss Eileen, scarce a month old, and poor Master Gerald away getting his schooling at Eton College ; for no place in Ireland would be good enough for *him*, you may depend. And small blame to her if she set her heart on him altogether after that. Ne'er a sign of cheering up I seen on her for a great while, unless only when the reports come with news of the prizes



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he was after getting. A fine scholar they said he was, but to my mind a trifle short he seemed of sense, the way he'd take a hold of his learning by the right end, so to speak, and be using it. Howane'er, the proud woman she was over him, and grudging to buy herself a new gown, or light herself a bit of a fire, for fear she mightn't have every penny would be wanted to keep him at college in Oxford. And planning all manner of grandeur for him she was, when he'd get done with it. There was some high-up people among her friends and relations that had promised to be doing great things for him. And you know the end he put on it all."

"An end there was put on it all, I well know," said Fergus.

"The very day he was twenty, last December," said Theresa, "he took and married Andy Flynn's daughter; she that a couple of year ago would be running barefoot about the roads minding their ould cow, or gathering sticks. What was to be done or said after that?"

"Nothing much maybe," said Fergus. "It might be said for Molly that a prettier colleen there wasn't going to Mass in the county Sligo; and sorry I am it can't be said for the Mistress that e'er a kind word she gave to poor Molly



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ever since she come home three months back with death on her face, and nobody thinking she'd see this latter end of August. And she a wife, and a widow, and in her clay, before she was scarce turned eighteen. To be pitied the creature was, anyway, let alone poor Master Gerald thinking the world's worth of her. But the Mistress kept as cruel set again her as she could be again some wicked ould *ceallach* of a woman was after putting a *comether* on him with the help of the Divil. I dursn't so much as bring a handful of flowers along with me this day, and them big white clematises and fringed pinks a rael picture"—he pointed to them with a lingering of tantalised regret—"I had me knife out twice to be cutting them."

"Whethen now, you were the wise man to not," Theresa said grimly. "Flowers out of this to bedizen a wake at Andy Flynn's! Musha, long life to them!"

"They wouldn't be the first poor Molly had from here, let me tell you," Fergus said to avenge the jeer. "Wondering I sometimes was what Master Gerald did be wanting with them, when I noticed him pulling them now and again of an evening about this time twelve month."



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"And if you were itself," Theresa rejoined, ready with an affronting pretext for her very real wrath, "little you have to do to be telling the likes of such scandals about the poor lad, and he in his grave."

"A quare scandal, bedad," said Fergus, "bringing a few roses to the girl he was about marrying. But if there was nothing coming from here, some other people had more nature in them. 'Twas an elegant wreath the Joyces of Barnaglas were sending, and the Doctor's wife——"

"If that come to the Mistress's knowledge, ne'er another chance he'd get to be curing or killing anybody in this place," Theresa said; adding in a more conciliatory tone, for she seriously wished her advice to be taken: "and look you, Fergus, if you'll be said by me, you'll step along now, and change your things, for Herself'll be out directly to cut the lavender, and a good guess she'll have of where you were, seeing you in your Sunday suit, with the black band—Saints above!" she exclaimed, looking closely at his sleeve, "them's the quare gobble-stitches you're after sewing it on with."

Fergus shrugged away from her angrily. "They were the best I could do," he said;



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“and when I want any of your remarks about my concerns, I’ll be asking for them.” With which he walked off quickly towards a door opening into the lawn. Theresa ran after him, calling shrilly : “Ah now, Fergus, don’t be cross, man. Sure it’s only tormenting you a bit I was ; and if you bring me the coat this evening, I’ll settle it for you rightly.”

To this Fergus turned a deaf ear, till just at the door he stopped and faced about. “Aye, bedad, sluthering you can be fast enough, when it suits your purpose ; and what you’re wanting is the key, to be gaping out on the road. There it is for you,” he said, thrusting it into her hand, “and a good riddance ’twould be if so happen you let out the divil you have of an ugly venomous temper. But apter you are to be letting another one in.” He disappeared with a bang.

For a moment Theresa stood twirling the key in her hand, and murmuring doubtfully : “I might have time yet to be just sticking me head out before she comes down ; but they’re liker to have all gone past by now.” Still the chance set her fluttering across the sunshine to the gate in the road wall. Scarcely had she turned the key, when out of the house through



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the porch door came her expected mistress with a basket on her arm ; a tall, portly figure, wearing a dress of light-coloured lilac, which looked almost white under the strong sunshine. It became her rather ill. On the whole her aspect suggested some large, full-blown blossom, that had felt the touch of an untimely frost. When she had taken only a few steps she was stopped by a small voice calling to her from the window above the porch : " Mother, mother, are you going out ? May I come down to you ? "

" No, my dear, not till you have finished writing your copy," Mrs. McNeill called back. " Besides, I'm busy just now."

" But maybe," the voice persisted, " I could go into the yard and play with Bridgie and Willie Rooney."

" Certainly not, Eileen," said her mother sharply. " I won't have you in the yard. Go back to your lessons at once." As the window clapped to, she moved on again towards the lavender-hedge, where she was met by Theresa, who came hurrying up. " I'm glad you've come out, ma'am," she said. " It's a grand day, and the air'll do you good."

Mrs. McNeill, who was staring into the mist



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of lavender-spikes as if counting the bees among them, looked up suddenly at the deep blue over her head, and looked down again quickly with a scared expression. "Do you know, Theresa, I doubt that there's much good left in the air," she said. "Sometimes I think that we're all like just a little sediment of earth lying at the bottom of a glass of clear water, and spoiling it."

"'Tis a pity to be thinking the likes of any such things, ma'am," Theresa said, taken aback slightly, and concerned.

"There's so little to think about now," Mrs. McNeill said listlessly.

"Ah, sure, there's many a thing, ma'am," said Theresa. "There's little Miss Eileen, now, had a right to be keeping us lively, watching her grow big, that's uncommon pretty grown this minute, Heaven bless her."

"Miss Eileen—perhaps we need be in no hurry to see her growing up," said Mrs. McNeill. "Did you hear what she said just now? She wanted to go and play in the yard with Mrs. Rooney's children."

"Well, what great harm if she did, ma'am?" said Theresa. "Moped and lonesome she gets by herself, the creature."



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"What harm would it be if one of these days she ran away from us for the sake of a groom or a garden boy?" Mrs. McNeill replied in a tone of matter-of-fact foreboding.

Theresa uttered a scandalised exclamation: "Saints and patience! Why now, meaning no disrespect to you, ma'am, that's a quare notion to take up about the innocent child, and she only turned seven year old. Not but what 'twould be quare enough if she was twenty."

"Yes; but the years keep on turning so fast, you see," Mrs. McNeill said, evading the point. "She won't be very long a child. It seems to me such a shred of time since Master Gerald was no older than she is—you might remember him then yourself, Theresa."

"Troth and I do so," said Theresa. "Three year old he wasn't all out, when I come, and hardly the height of yon little tree"—she pointed to a very small fir on the grass-plot close by—"he planted for you on your birthday, ma'am, last autumn."

"And by that time, if we had known the truth," said Mrs. McNeill, "his heart was set on Andy Flynn's daughter."



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"Her that they're after burying this day," said Theresa.

Mrs. McNeill threw down her basket with a passionate gesture: "Oh, Theresa, to think that it is too late! A year ago it would have been his salvation. Or if even he had lived to get his freedom, in a few months all this folly would have been forgotten. Then he had only just to take his degree, and he would have been ready for the appointment his great-uncle had promised us. But now—she has gone after him. I'd rather know that she was here, and hope to find him again myself."

"Whist, ma'am, dear," said Theresa. "No use there is in considering the different ways things might have happint, except to drive one's self distracted entirely. You might as well be making offers to catch a hold of the air that's after blowing past you in the wind. But according to my thinking, *that one's* better out of this; for a heart-scald she and her belongings might easily be to you, and no advantage to Miss Eileen, when she was growing up. But now that she's out of the way, there'll soon be no more talk about it, as you were saying, ma'am. I hear tell that the Flynn's are intending to go to the States, and then there'll



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be none of them left in it only the ould grandfather Murt Regan, that people say is quare in his head. There's more will have it, to be sure, that he's doings and dealings with them he'd better let alone ; but that's just romancing. And as for being afeared that Miss Eileen might have e'er a fancy for the likes of them, or any such, sure it's very easy you can keep a young lady out of harm's way ; she isn't like a boy that's bound to take his chance going hither and thither. Ne'er a lad need get a word with herself and her pretty face, unless them that you was wishful she would be speaking to ; and one of these fine days marrying her you'll be to one of these fine young gentlemen—a lord very belike ; no fear but you will, for she's a rael beauty."

" Beauties and fine young gentlemen," Mrs. McNeill repeated very bitterly ; " when you talk so, Theresa, I feel as if I were wandering through a world full of them, and lost for a sight of my lad who is gone."

" Ah, ma'am dear," said Theresa, " there's no more than the one road going after him. But sure we're all on it this minute of time, travelling as steady as the sun wheeling up through the sky ; that's certain. And plenty



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of ways there is that you might have been losing him, if he was stopping here itself. Suppose now he married the grandest in the land : yourself and the wife mightn't be agreeing together, and then it's little good you'd get of him. Now, it won't be so with Miss Eileen, for as the saying is :

My son is my son till he gets him a wife,  
But my daughter's my daughter all the days of her life.

Won't you make a beginning with the lavender, ma'am ? " she continued, picking up the basket and handing it to her mistress, who took it languidly. " I'll run in and see if Miss Eileen is ready to come out, and we'll bring the big basket and give you a hand. 'Twould be a good job to have it cut, for rain's threatening, and a wet night would destroy the blossom. I wouldn't wonder if there was thunder about, too," she said to herself, going towards the house, " but I'd liefer 'twould keep off till after Miss Eileen's in bed, she's that mortal afraid of the lightning."

As Theresa disappeared indoors, Mrs. McNeill expanded her gleaming scissors, but they had closed on scarcely a score of stalks, when a loud knock on the sheeted gate in the road wall



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made her look round. Then it was shaken violently and flew open, suddenly disclosing a strange, low-sized figure. A small old man he was, so much stooped that he appeared to be distortedly broadened in shape, and could see on ahead only by stiffly thrusting out his blue-shaven, under-hung jaw. He wore a very long, ragged great-coat, and a low-crowned soft felt hat, torn at the brim. With both hands he leaned on a thick, crook-handled stick. As he crossed the threshold Mrs. McNeill called to him: "May I ask what you are doing here—Murt Regan?"

Murt neither stopped nor answered, continuing to advance with a rocking hobble, undulating deeply, somewhat like the motion of a little boat on a choppy sea. He looked about him as he walked on, and talked seemingly to himself, though rather unnaturally loud: "A dacint bit of garden it is, bedad, and this only one corner of it. And flowers plenty: you wouldn't miss them if a milking-pail was picked out of it. And ne'er a one for her this day. . . . Well now, it's a fine place she'd be coming to be mistress of, if herself and Mr. Gerald, me grandson-in-law, had lived: she would so."

"Be so good as to go away at once," Mrs.



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McNeill called again ; but again he paid no heed.

“ ’Tis the first time ever I set foot inside yon stopped-up gate, but it wouldn’t be the last by many if poor Molly was mistress here. Looking down on her old rip of a grandfather is what she’d never do. And apt she was to be in it very presently, for the old, cross-tempered woman, old Widdy McNeill, won’t live a great while longer to keep anybody out. . . . Och, but there’s no contending with what took her—the pity it was, the pity.”

Mrs. McNeill took a few steps towards him, and raised her voice : “ If you don’t go away immediately, I shall have you turned out,” she said. “ You have no business here.”

Murt Regan upon this stood still, for the first time seeming to be aware of her presence. “ Is it yourself then, melady ? ” he said. “ Sure ’tis so altered you are entirely, I’d never have known you—that failed to what you was. But, ’deed, for the matter of that, it’s not intruding on you I’d be, if I hadn’t some business. ’Tis about fetching some flowers I come, melady, to be laying over your daughter-in-law’s grave below there ”—he pointed to the open gate—“ that has a desolate, bare look



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on it this day, though there was some minded to send a wreath for young Mrs. Gerald McNeill."

"You'll get no flowers here; you needn't wait," Mrs. McNeill said, as if warning off a pestilent type of tramp.

"True for you; long enough I might wait before e'er a bit of kindness 'ud grow up in the likes of you, that has no nature in you," said Murt Regan. "A fine, sizeable cross of white roses and lilies, and shaking ferns on wires you sent a while ago to old wizendy Colonel Mervyn's burying, that was nothing to you; and now bidding me begone you are, when asking I am just a handful of sweet-williams maybe, or fringeys pinks, for your own son's widow, she that's broke her heart fretting after him. Aye, and never come next or nigh her all the long while she lay a-dying. Many's the time I heard her say she wished she could be smelling a rose or a violet out of this, the same as poor Mr. Gerald would bring her of an evening last summer, and he courting. There was nought he could find in this place that *he'd* think too good for her——"

"Oh, indeed, Murtagh Regan," Mrs. McNeill broke in passionately, "it's very true—



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it's very true that she took away the best that we had here, and as far above her as a star in the sky. And it's my belief that she would never have got hold of him by herself; not she. There was some bad work, as perhaps no one knows better than you yourself, before she bewitched him to look at her—a little ragged girl, running in and out of a smoky cabin along with the chickens and pigs. That's what she'd be this day, as far as my son was concerned, if some one had not meddled in the matter without his knowledge."

Murt Regan chuckled like a jackdaw. "Oho, the Widdy McNeill thinks the colleen's pretty face wasn't enough without me putting a *comether* on him. I might aisy have got her a better man when I was about it."

"Whatever was done, it has brought them both their death," said Mrs. McNeill.

"I'm thinking," said Murt Regan, "that lies at the door of whoever drove them away out of this to where there was nought only the cruel wind keening over the deep snow. I was dreaming times and again I seen them digging it to bury him under it. But 'tis the black sods we're after laying over poor Molly his widow; and sure now, melady, you



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wouldn't begrudge her a bunch of flowers to brighten them up, and she come so near having the right to be gathering every one that's in it here on stalk or stem." He had come up quite close to her, and appeared to be watching the effect of his words with eyes that gleamed obscurely out of their seamed and shaggy setting. When Mrs. McNeill drew back a step or two, he advanced with a muttering grin.

"Very well," she said in desperate wrath, "I'll get the gardener to make you go."

"If it was only the few spikes of lavender you have there," Murt Regan said, peering into the basket; "they might be a contentment to her. Your daughter-in-law had ever a great wish for the sweet lavender." His hand was going into the basket, but Mrs. McNeill snatched it away. "I would rather see them burning in the fire," she said; and then she called: "McDonagh! McDonagh!"

"Musha moyah! there's a quare screech gone to loss," said Murt Regan. "Sorra the call is there to be troubling him. Just about quitting I am, the same as if you was the old Divil of an Angel you set yourself up to be, with the fiery flame of a sword turning folk out of the pleasant places into their cold graves,



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and they not let take so much as a flower along with them." He hobbled a few yards in the direction of the road gate, but stopped at a small bush with one red rose on it. Then he turned round and pointed his stick at Mrs. McNeill. "Well, good night to you, me kind lady," he shouted. "Sure now, since you wouldn't send so much as a spike of lavender to your poor young daughter-in-law, it's likely you won't be very apt to give aught out of your garden to e'er a body at all. But if ever you do, may the bitter bad luck go with it, and grow like a creeping weed. May them that gets it see never a good day after to the last of their lives, that won't be long, for all they're wishing them shorter, and seeking a grave before it's dug."

While he was speaking, Theresa Finucane had run out at the porch door and across the grass, till she stood beside her Mistress. "Between us and harm!" she said, panting. "I knew it was old Murt Regan cursing and banning. Quit out of this with your demented talk, you old vagabond, and let you never heed it, ma'am. For sure we'd be better, anyhow, giving away that description of bad luck than keeping it."



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"Och, she needn't think to be getting rid of it by that manner of means," said Murt Regan; "it's sowing trouble round her she'll be, and in a little while the seed'll come blowing back to her on the wind." He made a sudden grasp at the small rose bush, and broke off the spray with the rose on it.

"Theresa, Theresa—stop him," Mrs. McNeill cried too late. "It's a cutting that Master Gerald struck for me."

"I have it now, melady, and Molly's husband would have made me very welcome to it, for sure," Murt Regan shouted to her. He stripped the blossom off the long spray, which he threw on the ground, and waved the rose in triumph. "Taking it home with me I'll be, and saying a few of me prayers over it this night for luck," he said. "So good-bye to you, Widdy McNeill, and to you, Theresa Finucane, that might have had my granddaughter for mistress over you, if by good luck she'd lived a while longer."

"Troth and bedad, a hair of me wouldn't, not if it was to the age of a dozen old crows set on end," Theresa averred, tossing her head.

"But there they are, under the black sod, and under the white snow, and all one to both of



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them," Murt Regan said, dropping his voice as he began to hobble towards the road gate.

"I'll see that he lays hands on nothing else," said Theresa, and was starting to run after him, but Mrs. McNeill caught her by the arm. "I'll only just turn the key on him when he's out, ma'am," Theresa said; and then, finding herself still held, she called after the old man: "Well now, the Mistress is after making you a present of the rose, Murt Regan, so it's taking your own curses along with you you are, and joy go with them."

At this Murt Regan laughed as he went halting on, stopping now and then, and muttering to himself.

Mrs. McNeill did not seem to notice what was passing. She kept her hold of Theresa, and had a scared look as she said: "Oh, Theresa, what he says is quite true: I drove him out."

"And what else should you do with the old miscreant, ma'am?" said Theresa.

"No, no—Master Gerald," said Mrs. McNeill.

"And how could you have the two of them stopping in it, ma'am?" said Theresa boldly. "But I declare here's Fergus McDonagh at



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last." Fergus just then came up hurriedly in his working clothes. "You're just in time to be late, Fergus, and it's the worth of you ever," she said ungratefully, for she in fact found the diversion very welcome. "Here we've had old Murt Regan giving all manner of abuse and impudence, and grabbing the best rose in the garden, and ne'er a sign of you anywheres to be putting him out of it."

A rumble of distant thunder sounded while she was speaking, and Fergus said to his mistress: "You might be safer indoors, ma'am, I'm thinking, for we're apt very presently to have a great plump of rain." Then aside to Theresa he added, glancing from the broken rose-spray to the old man's receding figure: "Is Herself after giving him aught?"

"Not a bit of it," replied Theresa. "'Twas himself destroyed the little bush."

"I'd as lief then she'd given him some trifle of flowers," Fergus said discontentedly. "There's no harm in keeping such a one as he pacified. Fine mischief you've made, me good woman, letting him in on us, with your gaping out, and leaving the gate unlocked."

"It's mighty aisy for you to be discoursing," rejoined Theresa, "that traped off where



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you'd no call to go, and seen whatever was to see. But who minds what sort of talk yon old crazy body has? Come in, ma'am; 'tis raining hard this minyit, and the lavender must take its chance."

Pelting drops had indeed begun to fall, and a murky cloud was lifting up its crenellated edge from behind the house's gable end. At the road gate Murt Regan turned round: "Drowned 'twill be now, me loving lady, on you that would sooner see it burned in the fire," he said, and went out, closing the gate with a clang.

"Yes, let it go to loss like all the rest," Mrs. McNeill said, turning towards the house. She had gone only a few steps, when the red rose was flung over the road wall, and fell close beside her. Fergus McDonagh stooped to pick it up, but Theresa pushed it out of his reach with her foot. "Let it be," she said. "If it lies there, the rain belike might clean his old *pishtroques* off it."

There was a yelling hoot of laughter from the road-side of the wall; and as they went indoors the thunder rumbled again, nearer.



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### II

An afternoon late in August was again shining on that corner of Mrs. McNeill's garden, but half a score of years had passed since Murt Regan's visit. They had seen some changes. Near the porch door a fir tree, which had then measured its height by inches, now stood as many feet tall, and had expanded in proportion. The lavender hedge, which had blossomed once more, seemed to have broadened and lengthened; but in any case its lilac bloom would have gained conspicuousness from the absence of any others. Nowhere else was a flower to be seen in bed or on bush; white and red and purple and yellow, they had vanished as utterly as a melted rainbow. Fergus McDonagh and Theresa Finucane were both there, as they had been ten years ago. Not quite unaltered, indeed, by the lapse of time, yet very easily recognisable, for they had passed through a well-wearing middle-aged period of their lives. Theresa had aged chiefly in her attire, which had become more sober in fashion and hue; Fergus had grown some degrees stouter and more weather-beaten. He was clipping the grass about the fir tree, while she



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stood looking on and talking. It was her habit to do so when his work brought him near the porch door, which in consequence, perhaps, occurred rather less frequently than would otherwise have been the case.

As Fergus rose from his knees, he looked round him and said: "Well now, the place is a quare show these times, and that's a fact, ready it up as you will. Not the colour of a flower in it, any more than there is on the road-side of the wall, or as much, for there does be plenty of dandelions and daisies along under it most whiles."

"Sure you might be used to the look of it by this time," said Theresa. "Many a day it is since the Mistress took this notion against growing flowers."

"Aye is it," said Fergus, "ever since the day poor Molly Flynn was buried, and the old grandfather got in here cursing all before him. Just ten years back that is."

"Sure enough, that was the beginning of the whole thing," said Theresa. "For frightened the Mistress got, and small blame to her, when she thought she seen the bad luck coming on anybody she gave so much as a sprig of thyme or rosemary. And bedad some mighty



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odd things happened, Fergus. Do you mind Miss Honor Blake's wedding, when not a foot of her bridegroom ever come to it at all ; and she herself not living very long after ? There was flowers went from here that time—and more times as well. So it all turned the Mistress against the flowers, as if there did be harm in them themselves, given or no ; and presently nothing would content her except to do away with them every one."

"She was aisy content, if that contented her," Fergus said glumly. "It went to my heart to be digging up the big clumps of white lilies, the finest there were within seven miles round, and scarce enough anywhere. And Herself watching me as cautious as a robin after worms, but liker a dreary sort of crow—goodness forgive me for saying so—to see I didn't give away e'er a one of the roots. Burning them she had me on the heap of rubbish and weeds ; and a sinful pity it was."

"D'you know what I was thinking, Fergus ?" Theresa said, eyeing him solemnly. "When old Murt Regan quit a while ago I was thinking she'd maybe give over this fantigue, for one might aisy suppose he could have nothing more to do with bewitching the flowers on us here,



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wherever he's gone to, that's apt to be a long step from this. But for all he's in his clay now better than a couple of months, and not like to be troubling us again, she's no—Mercy on us all!" she exclaimed, seizing Fergus by the arm, "what was that?"

"What was *what*?" Fergus testily replied.

"I heard an unnatural sort of laugh somewhere close by," said Theresa.

"Unnatural how are you?" Fergus scoffed. "There's nothing so unnatural in a body letting a laugh going by on the road that you need be reeving the sleeve out of me shirt over it."

"Uncommon quare and ugly it sounded," Theresa said rather abashed. "But what I was going to say is that I see no signs of the Mistress changing her mind about the flowers."

"Sure not at all," said Fergus. "Only last week I tried her with asking leave to put down a few plants of Czar violets that Armitages' gardener was after giving me; but you might have thought it was clutches of vipers' and scorpions' eggs I had a mind to be hatching, for the hurry she was in forbidding me. I wouldn't wonder if her next vagary would be to have the old lavender hedge cut down. 'Tis



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the last blossoming thing we have left, and I'm surprised she's let it alone so long."

"She won't ever have it touched, no fear; you may be sure of that," said Theresa. "You see, she likes to be laying the heads of it among the clothes in her presses and drawers, because she thinks it keeps away the moths. Stacks she has in it upstairs of old clothes belonging to the Master and the children, that she does be treasuring up; and now and again I come on her looking through them, and turning them over, and slipping the folds of them between her fingers, like as if the feel of them was some sort of company to her. You'd be sorry to see the creature. But as for the little bits of lavender, I should suppose they were no great good. Them mischievous weevils of moths are like to have everything riddled with holes by this time. Howsome'er, so long as they don't fall in pieces on her while she's in it, that'll make no great differ; for nobody coming after her would be apt to set much store by them."

"A deal better employed she'd be watching some new plants growing up out in the fresh air, than fretting herself over the old rags that are less good for than so many of the dead leaves lying under the trees," said Fergus.



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"But, at all events, I noticed her latterly going about more with Miss Eileen, and I thought I got a cheerfuller sort of look off her besides. 'Deed, Miss Eileen would keep anybody diverted who gave her e'er a chance, the creature is that gay and pleasant in herself."

"Sure now, Fergus, yourself's the wonderful man for seeing what's forenent your eyes," Theresa said. "But when you noticed that much, you might aisy notice something more. Anyhow, I did, if you didn't; and if it's the way I'm thinking, the poor Mistress has reason to be pleased, troth has she. But I'd a right maybe to not be talking about it yet a while."

"True for you," Fergus assented promptly. "If you go foosthering with things before they're rightly rooted, so to spake, they'll be apt to do no good."

"I wouldn't mind telling *you*," said Theresa, "for, of course, you wouldn't be letting on——"

"Oh, not at all," said Fergus. "Why would you be delaying yourself, when you have the lavender to be cutting? Besides, it's near time for me to go see about milking Ruby." He gathered up his tools hastily, and was turning away when Theresa intercepted him.



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“ You’re in a quare fidget whatever,” she said ; “ and it not four o’clock yet. Ruby’ll wait a bit longer as peaceable and content as the lavender itself. Anyway, there’s no harm asking you did you hear any talk of Miss Eileen and young Mr. FitzAlleyne making a match of it. Sorra the doubt’s in me own mind but that he was paying her great attentions entirely the time we were stopping at Kilkee last month, and that nothing else brought him there except to be along with her. And now that we’re home again, back he is at Alleynes-court too ; and scarce a day but he’s coming over here, unless they’re meeting some place else. There’s a good few of the neighbours passing remarks to me about it, not that I’d be encouraging them : me eyes open, and me mouth shut, is the rule I go by. But you might be after hearing something yourself ? ”

“ Is it talk about them ? ” said Fergus. “ Whethen now, I’m hearing plenty of that this minyit.”

“ Yourself’s the contráry being, Fergus,” Theresa said resentfully. “ A body’ll get no more satisfaction out of you than if it was the spout of an old dry pump. But you might be hearing and talking of a deal worse things : a



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power of good luck there is in it altogether. Scarce any grander old ancient quality will you find in the land than the FitzAlleynes, and they owning all this country-side, forby the rest of their property, that you'd be tired reckoning up, by all accounts. And young Mr. Lance—Sir Lance he'll be, when his grandfather old Sir Ulick goes—is as fine a lad as heart could wish, if he hadn't a penny to his name, instead of riches untold. Nor taking her a long way away he'll be, with Alleynes-court there no distance to mention across the fields. As I was saying, the Mistress may well be real pleased over it. And to my mind the best part of it will be seeing her hold up her head in the world again, and take a pride in the good luck that's coming her way after all"—Theresa broke off with a violent start, for some one was laughing again on the road outside the wall. "I wish to goodness whoever it is would go about his business, and quit letting those hideous screeches, like an old, demented saygull," she said angrily and ineffectually, as the skirling laugh was repeated.

"Like a thing on wires, lepping and capering, you are this day," said Fergus. "Howane'er, I'll step out and see is anybody there—



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some drover very belike with drink taken out of the Fair. And then I'll go in at the yard-gate and look after Ruby."

"And I must set to work at the lavender," said Theresa, as he went off.

But before she had time to begin, a tall young girl in brown holland came out at the porch door, and across the grass to the hedge. She had dark eyes and hair, yet a strong light found golden gleams at the very edges of the shorter wavy locks, and she was slightly sun-browned, though a delicate pink came through quite unimpaired. "Are you going to cut the lavender? I'll give you a hand with it, Theresa," she said.

"'Deed then, Miss Eileen, I'm thinking you might find something better to do," Theresa said, looking at her discontentedly.

"But it's much too hot to go about looking for good things to do," said Miss Eileen; "and I mightn't find one in the end, you know."

"I could tell you of a thing, Miss Eileen, without troubling yourself to be looking at all," Theresa said insinuatingly.

"And what is that, Theresa?" Eileen inquired, mistrusting the tone.

"You might just run indoors again, Miss



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Eileen, dear," Theresa suggested with coaxing anxiety, "and be slipping on one of your nice new dresses; the cream-coloured Japanese silk maybe, with the pink sash to it, or else the white cambric with all the little frills, instead of that old, common, plain skirt."

"Why, Theresa, what's wrong with it?" said Eileen. "I think it's quite nice, and certainly it's quite clean, for it came back from the wash only this morning."

"Clean!" said Theresa. "Musha good gracious, Miss Eileen, 'tis no sort of thing for you to be wearing, if that's all you can say for it. Sure a kitchen-maid might put on a clean frock, when she was tidied up in the afternoon."

"Of course she might; but what then?" said Eileen. "It seems to me that I should be content with what is good enough for a kitchen-maid, when I am so much less useful than she, and so very much luckier—than anybody."

"A great consait you have of your luck, Miss Eileen, all of a sudden," Theresa said, on the alert at once.

"Oh, it's always well to make the best of things," Eileen said with evasive philosophy. "Give me the other pair of scissors, Theresa,



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please, and let us begin, before there is another shower. I'm always more than half sorry all the same, to see the lavender gone; our only flower. It's so strange, Theresa, and such a pity, that the Mistress won't let us have any here. I never can understand it. When I was little, I think, we used to have plenty."

"To be sure we had, Miss Eileen," said Theresa; "every sort of flowers. It wasn't until after poor Mr. Gerald died that she took this turn against them."

"And was it because of that?" said Eileen.

Theresa hesitated: "Well, partly it was, Miss Eileen—in a sort of a way at least."

"Theresa, I wish you would tell me what did really happen at that time," said Eileen. "There was some mystery about it, I know; but I'm not a child now to have secrets kept from me like jam-pots stuck up on a high shelf."

"Ah, it's not me you need be asking, Miss Eileen. Least said, soonest mended, is my opinion ever," Theresa said solemnly. "And 'twas the ugly sour jam, maybe, we had keeping from you, alanna, if you knew but all. . . . Sure now, you won't say I was telling you, Miss Eileen, for it's what I wouldn't do," she said,



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looking round her cautiously ; “ but the fact of the matter is, that poor Master Gerald, whatever bewitched him, a little while before he got his death took and married a girl out of the village, one of the Flynns, a granddaughter of old Murt Regan the cobbler, that they buried just before we went to Kilkee.”

The revelation startled Eileen into silence for a few moments. Then she said : “ That very old, bent man, who used to hobble about and scowl at us when we met him on the road ? I remember being rather afraid of him when I was small.”

“ Like enough the old creature would so, Miss Eileen,” said Theresa. “ Well, this Molly Flynn lived no great while at all after poor Master Gerald ; and on the day of her burying old Regan came in here raging and giving abuse ; and when he was turned out of it, he put a black curse on every flower that would ever blossom in this garden, and on everybody who would be given a one out of it. And it was that frightened the Mistress.”

“ I shouldn’t have thought,” said Eileen, “ that she would have minded such a thing so long.”

“ ’Twas all the troubles she had, I should



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suppose, made her easy terrified," said Theresa ; " for when a deal of them come about you, 'tis natural to think that they do be getting in by a deal of different ways, until you can't tell where they'll find a chance to slip in at ; and mistrustful a body is ever after of every hand's turn. Sure she had a power of troubles, Miss Eileen."

" She had indeed, indeed," said Eileen, the more earnestly for her new knowledge. " But it's too bad that she should have been scared out of taking any pleasure in the garden, which she must have found a great loss all these years."

" Well, glory be to goodness ! " Theresa said cheerfully, " the next wedding that we have anything to say to is apt to bring us the best of good luck, with no dying and fretting, and bad talk out of old Murt Regan, to vex the Mistress or—between us and harm ! There it is again." For some one was laughing on the road.

" What a *hideous* laugh," Eileen said, looking quite alarmed. " It sounds as if it were just outside the gate there. Who can it be, Theresa ? "

" Oh, just some tipsy boys going by, Miss Eileen," said Theresa, beginning to snip un-



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concernedly. "I believe there was a fair at Castleconroy to-day. If they don't go on out of that, I'll run over and lock the gate. 'Twas an unchancy old gate to me, it so happened, Miss Eileen; for only by reason of a falling out between Fergus McDonagh and myself about keeping it locked that same day of Molly Flynn's funeral he and I were very near making a match."

Eileen's alarm vanished in amazement, not of the kind that makes afraid. "You and Fergus McDonagh?" she said. "What a funny idea, Theresa—at least it sounds funny somehow when one hears of it first. But surely in all these years—ten years—you might have had time to make it up again."

Theresa shook her head gloomily, and disdainfully lifted her chin. "According to *my* experience, Miss Eileen, me dear," she said, "it's seldom or never a man thinks anything of you once you're after doing the least hand's turn to annoy him, even if he makes it up in a sort of way, just to suit his own convenience. Suppose you look crooked at him for the splinter of half a second, he'll remember it to you all the rest of your life, or as like as not bounce off with the notion that you done it



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of a purpose to be driving him away. Believe you me, alanna, the only way of managing them is to keep them humoured every way you can."

"It seems to me," said Eileen, "that to have much to do with such people would be extremely tiresome."

"Ah now, Miss Eileen," Theresa protested, "that's no notion for you to be taking up with. And you must consider, Miss Eileen, that they do be wonderfully easy pleased too, in a way. For instance, now, many a time a tasty bit of ribbon, or a pretty worked collar, that you wouldn't be a minyit running indoors and slipping on, will take their fancy, when only for it they mightn't look at you any more than if you were an old scarecrow stuck up in the middle of a lonesome field."

"I declare it's too bad of you, Theresa, to call me a scarecrow just because I'm not wearing all my finest 'clothes,'" Eileen said. "But if I'm really like one enough to frighten disagreeable people away, it would be rather convenient. I would certainly try if we heard that horrible person laughing again. Perhaps I'd better practise a little," she said, and began to extend her arms in various stick-like attitudes.



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“There now, Miss Eileen,” said Theresa, “you nearly knocked the scissors out of my hand, and might have scratched yourself with the points. Aren’t you the terrible young lady that you’ll do nought only make fun of a bit of good advice? But here’s the Mistress herself, and I daresay she’ll tell you the same thing.”

Mrs. McNeill, stepping out through the porch-door into the garden, just as she had done on that afternoon ten years before, was wearing a pleased expression, which largely disguised the further withering of her comeliness brought by their passage. At first sight, indeed, she looked actually younger than on the day of her daughter-in-law’s funeral. As she approached the lavender-hedge, she tilted back her shady hat to get an unobstructed view of her daughter, and smiled on obtaining it, as at the sight of some new possession. “What are you and Theresa talking about so earnestly, Eileen dear?” she said, misinterpreting Eileen’s gesticulations.

“She was telling me,” said Eileen, “that men are fit for nothing except quarrelling with, and that I’m only fit to frighten the crows—weren’t you, Theresa?”



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“Grant me patience, Miss Eileen!” Theresa replied, and turned appealingly to Mrs. McNeill. “Now isn’t it the truth, ma’am, that she had a right to be putting on some of her nice things?”

“And isn’t it the truth, dear, that this thing is quite nice enough for the garden?” said Eileen.

“If it was only the garden, I wouldn’t mind,” said Theresa. “What I was thinking of, ma’am, is the people that might happen to be in it.”

“Oh, nobody’ll come to-day; I know that he promised to go with old Sir Ulick to the Glenmorna Races”—Eileen began, but broke off, and rather stammeringly changed this particular statement into a more general one: “That is—I mean—that everybody most likely has gone to them except ourselves.”

“Well, have you shown Theresa your ring?” said Mrs. McNeill. “I’m sure she would think it fine enough, no matter who came.”

“No; she’s been so busy finding fault with my holland that I haven’t had a chance,” Eileen said, holding out her hand to Theresa. “But isn’t it a pretty one?”



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Theresa, taking Eileen's hand, looked closely at it for a while with inarticulate sounds of admiration. Then : "Saints above !" she said. "Oh, Miss Eileen, but it's grand entirely ! Isn't it now, ma'am ? With the big diamonds, and the fire that's shooting out of them, like as if 'twas little stars made of lightning. Sure, ma'am, whoever is after giving the likes of it to Miss Eileen is apt to be thinking a deal of her, wouldn't you say so, ma'am ? But isn't yourself the great little rogue, Miss Eileen, that you didn't show it to me before this ? Or when at all did you get it ? "

"Last night, Theresa," said Eileen. "And I thought I wouldn't show it to anybody till I woke up this morning, and found that I hadn't just dreamed it all."

"Sorrow the dream it was, honey," exulted Theresa. "And I need scarce be asking you who was it gave it to you."

"I daresay you can easily guess," Eileen said, signing silence to her mother behind Theresa's back. "My godmother has given me so many nice things, you know."

Theresa looked positively aghast. "*Your godmother*, Miss Eileen, old Lady Gordon ? She, was it ? Well now——"



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"Wasn't it very kind of her?" said Eileen.  
"And isn't it a beautiful ring?"

"Oh yes, Miss Eileen," Theresa said dejectedly. "'Tis a very respectable little ring, only maybe a trifle old-fashioned for you to be wearing yet awhile."

"Why, Theresa, there's no pleasing you," said Eileen. "Just now you were saying that I ought to put on all the finest things that I have; and this is certainly one of them."

"'Twas of a different matter I was thinking, and a different person altogether," Theresa said, and reverted gloomily to her lavender-clipping.

"Never mind her, Theresa," Mrs. McNeill interposed. "She's only tormenting you, and your own guess was quite right. Mr. Fitz-Alleyne gave it to her as an engagement ring."

Theresa emerged into radiance with a jubilant "Glory be to goodness! That's the best news I heard this many a day, ma'am. I wish you joy of it, Miss Eileen, with a heart and a half; and yourself too, ma'am. A finer young gentleman she couldn't have got in the width of Ireland."

"I must be careful not to offend him, you know, Theresa," Eileen said in an admonitory



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tone, "or frighten him away." And she extended a rigid arm.

"No fear, Miss Eileen; no fear," Theresa asserted boldly, and added aside to Mrs. McNeill: "I'll make it me business, ma'am, to put away them old shabby things, so that she won't be wearing them any more. And when's the wedding to be?"

"Oh, it will be soon enough to think of that next year," said Mrs. McNeill; "in the spring, perhaps, when the weather grows warm and pleasant again."

"Or in the summer, when this lavender is in blossom again," said Eileen.

"That would be a long day to put it off to, Miss Eileen," Theresa said disapprovingly.

"I believe that in her heart Theresa would like to have it to-morrow," said Eileen; "she's in such a hurry to get rid of me."

"Truth to say," Theresa admitted, "wishful I do be ever to shut me hand on what's put in it. There's no sense in delaying. But sure it's not getting rid of you, alanna, we will be at all, and you only going next door, so to speak. Anyway, a beautiful wedding 'twill be, spring or summer, please God; and the best of good luck will you have with it for certain,



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if it's no worse than what ourselves here will be wishing you, that you know all the days of your life. 'Deed this minyit of time——"

She was interrupted by Eileen's startled exclamation, as a peal of laughter came from a little way down the road. "There it is again—that horrid laugh," Eileen said. "But it sounded a bit farther off, I think."

"Who is it?" said Mrs. McNeill.

"Somebody that's this while back letting a yell now and again out on the road there," said Theresa; "coming home a trifle hearty, very belike, from the fair at Castleconroy."

"I wonder why our forefathers were so fond of building their houses just on the road-side," said Mrs. McNeill. "It's a disagreeable custom, I think. But I was looking for you, Theresa, to help me with those parcels for the post. Perhaps we had better come indoors and put them up now, as there will be just time before tea. Are you going on with the lavender, Eileen?"

"Yes," said Eileen. "I may as well; it's cooler here than in the house. What a still day it is; there seems to be nothing stirring except these energetic wild bees. I feel quite sorry for them, they must be so much too



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## NEMESIS IN A GARDEN

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warm in those velvet jackets ; and it would be such a bother never to move without humming—worse than wearing creaky shoes. I'm glad that I can be as lazy as I like."

"You always were an idle little wretch," Mrs. McNeill said, surveying her with complacent pride. "I shouldn't wonder if they were soon refreshed by a shower-bath, for it's beginning to look black over the hills."

She went towards the house, followed by Theresa, who after a few steps, turned and ran back to the lavender-hedge to say : "I'll come out again directly, Miss Eileen, and bring you your lace collarette with the blue ribbon run through it, to smarten you up a bit. For I'm thinking he won't stay very long at them old races."

"Theresa, you are the queer, foolish woman," Eileen said, laughing.

"Maybe I've got more wit than you think, Miss Eileen," Theresa rejoined oracularly as she hurried off.

And, true for her, as she would have said herself, she was hardly out of sight, when through a gate in the wall furthest from the road came a tall young man in a light grey suit and straw hat.



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"Why, Lance," Eileen said, as he approached "I thought you were at the races."

"And I *was* at them, Eileen, for my sins," he said, "and I saw two of them, the slowest races that ever were run—or rather crawled."

"How curious," Eileen remarked, "when they generally are so good."

"Oh, I daresay it was mainly because I intended to come away at the end of them," said Lance FitzAlleyne. "The time was all right, I suppose, for my grandfather seemed to think them splendid."

"I hope he didn't mind your coming away so soon," said Eileen.

"Not a bit," said Lance; "indeed, he was awfully decent about it. He said that he couldn't expect me to behave in the least like a rational being, and that he knew I was wishing all the horses and their riders with Pharoah's host, and that he had no doubt I would either break both our necks, or rush into a police-trap at forty-five miles an hour, if he trusted me to drive him home."

"That wasn't so very nice of him, was it?" said Eileen.

"Ah, but he added that I had a capital excuse here," said Lance. "So: 'True for



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you,' says I, and I left him quite content with some of his cronies, and came along across the fields. How quiet this place is after the racket over there at Glenmorna, and how cool you look in that soft greyish brown thing, Eileen; it is uncommonly pretty. I wonder why other girls don't dress that way?"

"Wouldn't it be rather tiresome," said Eileen, "if they all looked just alike?"

"There's no fear of their looking too much like *you*, whatever they wear," said Lance.

They discussed this point, and some other kindred subjects, at much length, with a deep interest, which would hardly be shared by anybody else, during the lapse of a full quarter of an hour, before Eileen bethought her of resuming her lavender harvesting. When she had been clipping for a few minutes Eileen said: "Here's a branch almost trailing on the ground, and twisted in under the others, with such very fine spikes that it would be a pity not to cut them, but they're out of my reach."

"I can get at them easily," Lance said, producing a penknife, and kneeling down recklessly on the damp ground at the side of the hedge farthest from the house. Whereafter presently Theresa emerged from the porch door,



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carrying a bit of white lace with a long blue ribbon dangling, and unaware of the visitor behind the interposing lavender bushes. Eileen, looking round, saw Theresa hurrying along, and went to meet her.

"Now, Miss Eileen, jewel," Theresa said cajolingly, "just let me fasten this on you. 'Twill set you off elegantly; and you couldn't tell but Mr. FitzAlleyne might be here yet, races or no, on his way home, and then——"

"He'd go flapping off at the sight of me like a frightened crow," said Eileen, "and never come back."

Theresa was rapidly tying on the collar. "It's passing remarks in his own mind he might be on the differ he noticed between you and the grandly dressed young ladies he was after seeing on the race-course. Or suppose he would be saying out something of the sort, that mightn't please you, Miss Eileen, and the two of yous got annoyed and argufying with each other, till he took offence somehow, and went off with himself. 'Twould be the cruel pity altogether. I wouldn't have such a thing happening for the full of the basket of thrupenny bits." At this moment Lance rose to his feet, and Theresa, catching sight of him,



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held up her hands in consternation. "Mercy on me, if himself wasn't in it all the while, listening to me discourses!" she said, and fled precipitately back into the house.

Lance came forward with a little sheaf of lavender in his hand: "I was sorry to interrupt her exhortations," he said, "which were both edifying and entertaining; but as they evidently weren't meant for my benefit, I suppose it would have been hardly fair to lie in ambush any longer."

"Poor Theresa is a very absurd person," said Eileen, "and always tormenting herself about the most unlikely things she can imagine. One of them is that you'll be shocked at my shabby appearance. What beautiful full-blown bits you have got, all over little tufts of stars."

"Will you give me some of them to bring home?" said Lance. "I'd like to have them for Grannie. She's very fond of lavender, and I heard her lamenting the other day that ours was all blighted or mildewed."

"To be sure I will; we'll tie up a bunch for her," said Eileen. Then starting perceptibly she said under her breath affrightedly: "There it is again."

"What is the matter, Eileen?" said Lance.



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"Did you hear anything?" said Eileen. "For some time past somebody seems to keep on wandering up and down there, and laughing in a very fiendish way."

"If it bothers you, this person must be requested to wander elsewhere," said Lance. "It may be some unfortunate lunatic; I thought it sounded rather demented."

"Good evening, McDonagh," said Eileen, for at this moment Fergus passed by, suddenly quickening his steps, as he discovered that he had come upon a *tête-à-tête*.

"Good evening to you, kindly, Miss Eileen," he said; "and to you, sir." The "kindly" was an unconscious expression of the feelings roused by the news which Theresa had rushed out to tell him on his return from milking.

"Why, Fergus McDonagh, is it you?" said Lance. "I haven't seen you for ages, and seldom enough since the time when you used to teach me to fish, in the holidays. Do you remember? Down at Clondaragh Bridge."

"Troth do I remember well, sir," said Fergus; "and a great hand you got to be at catching the trouts. But sure the good luck has kept along with your Honour, I'm thinking, from that day to this, and more power to it."



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## NEMESIS IN A GARDEN

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"When you are passing the road gate, McDonagh, please lock it," said Eileen, "for there is still some one outside making a noise."

"I will so, Miss Eileen," he said; "I seen nobody when I was out there a while ago, but he's apt to be streeling about somewheres near. Going to gather up me tools I am, for I think we'll very presently have a great polthogue of rain, if it isn't thunder and hail, for there's a big bank of black clouds rising themselves up agin the wind at the other side of the house." He went over to the gate, which he locked, and as he was doing so Lance said: "I'm afraid I must be off now. I promised to be home early, because Grannie is alone, and rather knocked up with a touch of her rheumatism. May I come over to-morrow soon after breakfast, and help to finish the lavender?"

"Oh yes," said Eileen; "and we shall have time then for Theresa's quarrel too, as it didn't come off to-day. Ah, it's beginning to drop rain already; I hope you won't be drowned. How shall we tie up this lavender?" she said, taking the bunch from him, and adding some more to it out of the basket. "Oh, this will do nicely; it was really a very convenient idea of Theresa's after all," and pulling the blue



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ribbon out of her collar, she wound it round the lavender stalks.

"It's well for poor Theresa's peace of mind that she doesn't see you," said Lance. "And I warn you that you'll never recover your ribbon. I intend to keep it, no matter how forbidding you look without it."

"In that case I'd better generously present you with it," said Eileen. "The first thing I have ever given you."

"Except a mere trifle called Eileen McNeill," Lance said, taking the bunch from her hand, which almost let it fall, as a low growl of thunder suddenly rumbled, accompanying a shriller and nearer sound.

"Which is it that you are so afraid of, sweet Heart?" said Lance. "The laugh or the thunder?"

"Of neither," Eileen boldly asserted, recovering herself. "The thunder is ever so far off, and the gate is locked safely against the laugh. Besides that, if I belong to you, of course you are bound to protect me from everything."

"Thunder, and the laughter of fools are things that one can't drive away with a stick, as the saying is," Lance replied; "but they



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shan't annoy my property if I can prevent them." They were moving, as he spoke, towards the gate through which he had come, and they stood there talking for some minutes, notwithstanding that all the sunlight was blotted out of the air, and replaced by the gleam of large raindrops, glancing straight down more and more thickly.

By and by Theresa, darting heedlessly out at the porch door, all but collided with Fergus, who came round a corner of the house, shouldering his garden tools. "Mercy on us!" she said, "quare it is that when you're in a hurry everybody else does be under your feet. And where are Miss Eileen and Mr. Lance gone off to now? I was coming to tell them that the tea's ready; and it's settling to rain in sluices, if it does nothing worse."

"Sure Mr. Lance is just about starting to go home," said Fergus; "and there they are at the gate saying good-bye yet. You might suppose he was going to the Well of the World's End, for the length of time they're over it."

"Och, but yourself's the hard-hearted old bachelor grown, Fergus," Theresa said reproachfully, "that has no patience with the



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young ones courting, after the two of us coming within an ames' ace of being the very same way ourselves."

"Bedad then that's the first ever *I* heard of it," said Fergus. "Before I come by the use of me sober senses 'twould be, or else after I was losing them clean and clever; and one or other's apt to have happened Mr. FitzAlleyne now, or he wouldn't be delaying Miss Eileen there now, in her bare head, out under the rain."

"Here she is now," Theresa said, and ran on to meet Eileen, who was coming towards the house. "Patience guide us, Miss Eileen! What's gone with your bit of ribbon? And your collarette flapping about not fit to be seen."

"Oh, Mr. FitzAlleyne has it," said Eileen.

"Has he so?" said Theresa, brightening up. "And you after giving it to him, Miss Eileen? Well now, if that's where it is, I haven't a word to say."

"I tied up a bunch of lavender for him with it," said Eileen.

Theresa stood aghast. "Is it a bunch of the lavender you're after giving him? Oh, Miss Eileen, what at all took you to go do that? The Mistress will be distracted."



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"But, Theresa," said Eileen, "he asked for some to bring to old Lady FitzAlleyne, who is ill. Surely the Mistress could not wish me to have refused it?"

"It's my belief she'd sooner you'd given him the eyes out of your head, Miss Eileen," said Theresa gloomily.

Eileen shrugged her shoulders slightly. "Well, I must go in now," she said, "for I want to look for something in the drawing-room," and she ran into the house.

"Just to get a sight of him out of the window crossing the lawn, I'll be bound," said Theresa. "Themselves is the foolish creatures sure enough. Man-alive," she called to Fergus, "here's Miss Eileen took and given Mr. FitzAlleyne a bunch of the lavender. 'Twill be a bad upset to the Mistress."

"Aye would it," said Fergus. "But it might never come to her knowledge, if it wasn't screeched about the place like a basket woman crying fish."

"The bad luck will, anyway, that's certain," said Theresa.

"Wonderful frightened you are of the bad luck these times," said Fergus, "that used to be standing out ever there was nothing in it



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except things just happening contr'ary by chance."

"Frightened I am now, that's sure," said Theresa; "and I don't rightly know why, unless it might be the storm coming on—och, there was the great flash!" She crossed herself as a blinding glare quivered through the raindrops. "Or else the daft body outside there, whoever it is, letting his ugly *scrads*—I hear him again now. And here's the Mistress herself, in a great taking too about something."

Mrs. McNeill had indeed run out with uncovered head into the hissing rain. "Oh, Theresa," she cried, "I've just seen Mr. Fitz-Alleyne crossing the lawn with a bunch of lavender in his hand. That foolish, foolish child must have given it to him. How could you let her? Somebody must go after him at once, and get it away from him—oh, McDonagh, you are there—you had better go; run after him and bring it back."

"Begging your pardon, ma'am," said Fergus, "but his Honour's not very apt to be handing me over anything Miss Eileen's after giving him herself."

"You must insist on it," said Mrs. McNeill.



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"Aye, ma'am ; but suppose he has his own notion of insisting too ? " said Fergus.

"I'll go myself then," she said ; "there's no time to waste in folly." And she was speeding on, when Theresa said angrily to Fergus : "Run after her, you gomeral ; run after her this instiant, and turn her back out of the wet. You can be telling him that Miss Eileen's frightened here, and fretting after him, and wanting him back, and that'll bring him like a flash—tell him that, or the first lie that comes into your head. What was your tongue given to you for, man ? And when he's come, we can easily spirit away the unchancy bunch of lavender by some manner of means."

"I'm going, woman," Fergus said, setting off, but throwing a sarcasm over his shoulder in defence of his dignity : "'Twould be a quare thing if a body who has that much gab out of her didn't talk a bit of sense now and again by accident."

"He won't be long catching her up at that rate," said Theresa. "I declare to goodness everybody's going crazy. It's Miss Eileen now, tearing out into the storm, and the air thick with lightning that she does be terrified of."



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Stand still, for your life, Miss Eileen, there's a darling." For Eileen was flying past, and struggled hard, as Theresa seized and held her.

"You mustn't stop me, Theresa," she said breathlessly. "I was looking out of the drawing-room window, and I saw Lance taking shelter under the big elm. You know it's most dangerous to do that in a storm; so I must go and get him to come away immediately."

"No fear, jewel, no fear," said Theresa. "Fergus McDonagh's running this minyit like a hare to fetch him out of it—he's there by now. Sure, if you consider all the storms that old tree's gone under, and ne'er a whit on it. And here's the Mistress back again," as Mrs. McNeill joined them; "so we'd a right to be all going in out of this. Whoo! there was another bright flash; and that creature on the road like as if he would be jeering at it. We'd be a deal better indoors."

"I *will* wait here till he comes," said Eileen. "I'm sure it was to keep that wretched lavender dry that he went under the tree. I do wish I'd never given it to him."

"You may well wish it, Eileen," said her mother. "I thought you understood that



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nothing must be given away out of this garden. Harm follows it as surely as our shadows follow us."

"But it would have been so strange to refuse him, and so unkind, when he wanted it for a sick person," said Eileen.

"'Tis better to be unkind than unlucky; aye, and better to be sick," Theresa said grimly. "But for that matter, the bit of lavender, and the bad luck of it, might cure her with giving her her death."

"Didn't you tell me yourself, Theresa, that I ought always to humour him?" Eileen said with a forlorn attempt at levity, which only caused Theresa to shake her head rebukingly and reply: "Ah, indeed, Miss Eileen, 'tis no time to be casting up every word a body might happen to say."

Mrs. McNeill looked round her fearfully into the mirk-canopied garden, with its flickering fires and straight-combed strands of rain. "I feel as if we had thrown our last chance away," she said, "to bring some evil thing swooping down upon us."

At this Eileen wrung her hands in sudden despair. "Oh, what shall I do?" she said. "What have I done?"



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"Sure, no harm, alanna, no harm at all," Theresa said soothingly. "The Mistress is just a trifle put about and uneasy like. Glory be to goodness, ma'am, you didn't leave time for any mischief to happen. You'll see Fergus coming directly, I'll go bail, bringing back Mr. FitzAlleyne, and the bunch of lavender, and all our good luck along with it. Why, the storm's drifting off already; that big flash a while ago was the worst of it, and the sky looks to be a bit clearer."

"I believe it really does," said Mrs. McNeill.

"I daresay that in another minute or two we'll all be quite ashamed of our frights," Eileen said, drawing a long breath of relief from clutching fear. But next moment it assailed her again, and she shrank close to Theresa, shuddering.

"What is it, Miss Eileen?" Theresa whispered anxiously.

"I thought it seemed as if whoever laughed just then was shaking the road-gate," said Eileen; "but very likely the rain or the lightning may have made it look so. Perhaps," she added, though making the suggestion with evident reluctance, "perhaps if there is some unfortunate demented creature straying about



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out there, we ought to let him in that he may get under shelter."

"Mercy on us, Miss Eileen! 'twould be no sort of thing to go do," Theresa objected even with vehemence. "It's not wanting any crazy folk in here we are—or tramps maybe, thieving everything they can lay their hands on. How would you like to see one of them legging it off down the road with your grand shining ring grabbed off your finger?"

"No, no, Eileen; we'll keep the gate safely locked," said Mrs. McNeill. "I think I hear them coming. Yes, but it's only McDonagh. I suppose Lance has gone home."

It was Fergus rushing headlong, as if he were dreadfully pursued. In his hand he grasped the bunch of lavender, shrivelled and charred, with the blackened spikes dropping off it at every step. As he ran up, he held it out to Mrs. McNeill. "Look at it, look at it, ma'am, in God's name," he said. "Do you see the way it is? Look at it, Theresa." The three women gathered round him amazed.

"What have you there, Fergus?" said Theresa. "Och, man alive, 'tis Miss Eileen's bunch of lavender, and it all blackened, as if it was after being through the fire."



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"Where did you find it?" said Mrs. McNeill.

"I got it off Mr. FitzAlleyne," said Fergus, "that's lying there under the big elm. Black as a coal this is, scorched with the lightning—scorched black with the lightning; but worse he is himself. The Lord be good to us all!"

"And what ails him?" Theresa said, staring at him stupidly.

"The lightning, woman; the lightning," said Fergus, "that's after burning him to a cinder."

Mrs. McNeill took the scorched bunch, and looked closely at it. "I remember now," she said. "I told him that I would rather throw it into the fire."

Eileen snatched it out of her hand saying: "Give it to me—it's mine. He's sent back my present, though he said that I should never see it again. But when shall I see *him*? He said that he'd come back early. I'll go and look." She turned towards the gate into the lawn, but Fergus interposed himself: "Don't let her go, ma'am," he commanded; "don't let her, for God's sake. Mind her, Theresa. 'Twould be just the death of her."

However, Eileen stood still of her own accord,



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and began to unwind the ribbon from round the crumbling stalks. "They're all falling in pieces, and quite black," she said. "It's really only fit for a scarecrow now. And look at my hand," holding it up, blackened by the charred lavender. "It might be a scarecrow's too. How did this sparkling thing get on it?" She threw the lavender down on the grass at her feet, and pulled off her ring, laughing wildly.

Mrs. McNeill turned away cowering, with her fingers in her ears. "Mad," she said, "mad."

Theresa and Fergus stood side by side, looking helplessly at each other. She was as silent as he. Eileen continued to look at her own hand and laugh, while a hideous echo seemed to come from the road.

Then suddenly the gate was violently flung open, and in at it limped an old man, small and bent, in a long coat and wide-brimmed hat, swinging himself forward on a stick. Half-way across the grass plot he stopped, and stood pointing his stick at the bunch of lavender with dimly seen grins and grimaces, and a low croaking chuckle. The world, spell-bound, seemed to wait horror-stricken until he should speak.







“Spurns enviously at straws . . .”







## *Quin's Rick*

CLEAR skies and gentle breezes had so favoured Hugh Lennon's harvesting that his threshing was all safely done by the first week in October, and as the fine weather still continued, he took his wife, according to promise, for a ten days' stay at the seaside. Mrs. Hugh was rather young and rather pretty, and much more than rather short-tempered. The neighbours often remarked that they would not be in Hugh Lennon's coat for a great deal—at times specifying very considerable sums.

From her visit to Warrenpoint, however, she returned home in high good-humour, and ran gaily upstairs to remove her flowery hat, announcing that she would do some fried eggs, Hugh's favourite dish, for their tea. Hence he was all the more disconcerted when, as he followed her along the little passage, she suddenly wheeled round upon him, and confronted him with a countenance full of wrath. She had merely been looking for a moment



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out of the small end window, and why, in the name of fortune, marvelled Hugh, should that have put her in one of her tantrums? But it evidently had done so. "Saw you ever the like of that?" she demanded furiously, pointing through the window.

"The like of what at all?" said Hugh.

"Look at it," said Mrs. Hugh, and drummed with the point of her umbrella on a pane.

Hugh looked, and saw, conspicuous at a short distance beyond their backyard, a portly rick of straw, which their neighbour, Peter Quin, had nearly finished building. A youth was tumbling himself about on top of it with much agility, and shouting "Pull!" at each floundering fall. "Sure," said Hugh, "it's nothing, only young Jim Quin leppin' their rick."

"I wisht he'd break every bone in his ugly body, then, while he's at it," declared Mrs. Hugh.

"It's a quare wish to be wishing agin the poor decent lad," said her husband, "and he lepping plenty of ricks for ourselves before now."

"And what call have they to be cocking up e'er a one there," said Mrs. Hugh, "where



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## QUIN'S RICK

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there was never such a thing seen till this day?"

"Why wouldn't they?" said Hugh. "It's a handy place enough for a one, I should say, there on the bit of a headland."

"How handy it is!" said his wife, "and it shutting out the gap in the fence on me that was the only glimpse I had into our lane."

"Well, supposing it does, where's the odds?" said Hugh. "There's ne'er a much in the lane for anybody to be glimpsing at."

"The greatest convenience in the world it was," declared Mrs. Hugh, "to be able to see you crossing it of a morning, and you coming in from the lower field, the way I could put the bit of bacon down ready for the breakfast."

"Musha, good gracious, woman alive, if that's all's ailing you, where's the need to be so exact?" said Hugh.

"Exact, is it?" said Mrs. Hugh. "Maybe you'd like to have the whole of it melted away into grease with being set on the fire half an hour too soon. Or else you to be standing about open-mouthed under me feet, like a starving terrier, waiting till it's fit to eat. That's how it'll be, anyway, like it or lump it."



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And I used to be watching for old Matty Flanagan going by with the post-bag, and the Keoghs coming back from early Mass—'twas as good as an extra clock for telling the time. But now, with that big lump of a thing stuck there, I might as well be shut up inside of any old prison. Them Quins done it a-purpose to annoy me, so they did. Sorra another reason had they, for what else 'ud make them take and build it behind our backs? But put up with it is what I won't do. Stepping over to them I'll be this night, and letting them know how little I think of themselves and their mean tricks. And if I see old Peter, I'll tell him you'll have the law of him unless he gets it cleared away out of that to-morrow. Bedad will I; and yourself 'ud say the same, if you had as much spirit in you as a moulting chicken."

"Have sense, Julia," Hugh remonstrated, wedging in a protest with difficulty. "Stop where you are, now, quiet and peaceable. It's only making a show of yourself you'd be, running out that way raging about nothing. What foolish talk have you about the man moving his rick, that he's just after building? You might as well be bidding him move



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## QUIN'S RICK

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Knockrinkin over yonder; and he more betoken with his haggart bursting full this minyit. What annoyance is there in the matter, Julia woman? Sure in any case it won't be any great while standing there, you may depend, and they bedding cattle with it, let alone very belike sending in cart-loads of it every week to the market. Just content yourself and be aisy."

But, as he had more than half expected, Hugh spoke to no purpose. His wife would not be said by him, and his expostulations, in fact, merely hastened her impetuous departure on her visit to the Quins. She returned even more exasperated than she had set out, and from her report of the interview Hugh gathered that she had stormed with much violence, giving everybody "the height of abuse." He was fain to console himself with the rather mortifying reflection that "the Quins knew well enough she did be apt to take up with quare nonsensical fantigues, that nobody minded."

A hope that the morrow might find her more reasonable proved entirely vain, as many additional grievances, resented with increasing bitterness, had been evolved during the night.



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When Hugh went out to his work, he left her asserting, and believing, that the noise of the wind whistling round the rick hadn't let her get a wink of sleep, and when he came in again he found her on the point of setting off to the police barracks that she might charge the Quins with having "littered her yard all over with wisps of straw blown off their hijjis old rick, till the unfortunate hens couldn't see the ground under their feet." This outrage, it appeared, had been aggravated by Micky Quin, who remarked tauntingly that "she had a right to feel herself obligated to them for doing her a fine piece of thatching"; and an interchange of similar rejoinders had taken place. On the present occasion Hugh was indeed able forcibly to stop her wild expedition by locking both the house doors. But as he knew that these strong measures could not be more than a temporary expedient, and as arguments were very bootless, he was at a loss to determine what he should do next. She had begun to drop such menacing hints about lighted matches and rags soaked in paraffin, that he felt loth to leave her at large within reach of those dangerous materials. Already it had come to his knowledge that rumours



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were afloat in the village about how Mrs. Lennon was threatening to burn down the Quin's rick. The truth was that she had said as much to several calling neighbours in the course of that day.

Hugh's perplexity was therefore not a little relieved when, early on the following morning, his wife's eldest married sister, Mrs. Mackay from beyond Kilcraig, looked in on her way to market. Mrs. Mackay, an energetic person with a strong will regulated by abundant common sense, was one among the few people of whom her flighty sister Julia stood in awe. In this emergency her own observations, together with her brother-in-law's statements, soon showed her how matters stood, and she promptly decided what steps to take. "Our best plan," she said to Hugh apart, "is for Julia to come along home with me. She'll be out of the way there of aught to stir up her mind, and she can stop till she gets pacified again. 'Twill be no great while before she's glad enough to come back here, rick or no rick, you may depend; for we're all through-other up at our place the now, with one of the childer sick, and ne'er a girl kept. I'll give her plenty to do helping me,



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and it's much if she won't be very soon wishing she was at home in her own comfortable house. She doesn't know when she's well off, bedad," Mrs. Mackay added, glancing half enviously round the tidy little kitchen.

Hugh fell in with her views at once. The Mackays lived a couple of miles at the other side of Kilcraig, so that Julia would be safely out of harm's way, and he could trust her sister to keep her from doing anything disastrously foolish. So he cheerfully saw his wife depart, and though her last words were a vehement asseveration that she would "never set foot next or nigh the place again, as long as there did be two straws slanting together in Quins' dirty old rick," he confidently expected to see her there once more without much delay.

Up at the Mackays' struggling farmstead on the side of Knockrinkin, Mrs. Hugh found things dull enough. Internally the house was incommensurable and crowded to uncomfortable excess, and its surroundings externally were desolate and lonesome. Mrs. Hugh remarked discontentedly that if the inside and outside of it were mixed together, they'd be better off, anyway, for room to turn round in, and quiet to hear themselves speak; but the operation



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## QUIN'S RICK

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appeared impracticable. Nor were the domestic tasks with which Mrs. Mackay provided her by any means to her taste, and her discontent continued. One evening, shortly after her arrival, she grew so tired of hearing the children squabble and squawl, that as soon as supper was over she slipped out at the back door into the soft-aired twilight. She proposed to wile away some time by searching the furzy, many-bouldered field for mushrooms and blackberries, but neither could she find, and in her quest she wandered a long way down the swarded slope, until she came to a low boundary wall. There she stopped, and stood looking across the valley towards a wooded patch beyond the village, which contained her own dwelling, as well as that of the hateful Quins. Her wrath against them burned more fiercely than ever at the reflection that they were clearly to blame for her present tedious exile. The thought of going home, she said to herself, she couldn't abide, by reason of their old rick.

Through the dusk the darker mass of those trees loomed indistinctly like a stain on the dimness, and Mrs. Hugh fancied that she could make out just the site of the Quins' rick—the



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## DOINGS AND DEALINGS

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best of bad luck to it. Why didn't some decent tramp take and sling a spark of a lighted match into it, and he passing by with his pipe? As she strained her eyes towards it, she suddenly saw on that very spot the glimmer of a golden-red light, glancing out among the shadowy trees. For a moment she was startled and half scared, but then she remembered that it would be nothing more than the harvest moon rising up big through the mist. Hadn't she seen it the night before looking the size of ten? This explanation at least half disappointed her, and she said to herself with dissatisfaction, watching the gleam waver and brighten, that it looked as red as fire, and she wished to goodness it was the same as it looked. "There'd be nothing aisier than setting the whole concern in a blaze, standing so convanient to the road," she thought, while she gazed and gazed with tantalised vindictiveness over the low, tumble-down wall.

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More than two hours later Mrs. Hugh Lennon came hurrying in at the Mackays' back-door. By this time it was dark night outside, and she found only Mrs. Mackay in the



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## QUIN'S RICK

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kitchen, for Himself and the children had gone to bed.

"Where in the world have you been all the evening?" Mrs. Mackay inquired, with some indignation. "Leaving me with nobody to give me a hand with the childer or anything, and keeping me now waiting up till every hour of the night."

"Quin's rick's burnt down," burst out Mrs. Hugh, who evidently had not heard a word of her sister's remonstrance. She looked excited and exultant; her hair was roughened by the wind, and her skirts were bedraggled with a heavy dew brushed off tussocks and furze bushes. Mrs. Mackay eyed her with a start of vague suspicion.

"And who did you get that news from," she said, "supposing it's true?"

"Amn't I after seeing it with me own eyes?" triumphed Mrs. Hugh. "Watching it blazing this long while down below there by Connolly's fence. First of all I thought it was only the old moon rising, that would do us no good; but sure not at all, glory be! Burnt down to the ground it is, every grain of it; and serve them very right."

"What took you trapessing off down there,



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## DOINGS AND DEALINGS

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might I ask ? ” inquired Mrs. Mackay, her scrutiny of her sister growing more mistrustful.

“ Is it what took me ? ” said Mrs. Hugh. “ I dunno rightly. Och, let me see ; about getting some mushrooms I was, I believe, and blackberries.”

“ A likely time of night it was to be looking for such things,” said Mrs. Mackay, “ and a dale of them you got.”

“ There isn’t a one in it ; all of them’s as red as coals of fire yet, or else as green as grass—sure, what matter ? ” said Mrs. Hugh. “ Anyway, I was took up with watching the baste of an old rick flaring itself into flitters ; and a rael good job.”

“ A job it is that you’re very apt to have raison to repent of,” Mrs. Mackay said severely, “ if so be you had act or part in it.”

“ Is it me ? ” Mrs. Hugh said, and laughed derisively. “ Raving you are, if that’s your notion. A great chance I’d have to be meddling or making with it, and I stuck up here out of reach of everything. I only wisht I’d been at our own place to get a better sight.”



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## QUIN'S RICK

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"How can I tell what chances you have or haven't, and you after running wild through the country for better than a couple of hours?" Mrs. Mackay said. "Plenty of time had you, for that matter, to be skyting there and back twice over, if you was up to any sort of mischief; let along going about talking and threatening, and carrying on, till everybody in the parish is safe to be of the opinion yourself was contriving it with whoever done it, supposing you didn't do it all out. And it's the quare trouble you might very aisy get yourself into for that same, let me tell you. There was a man at Joe's place that got three year for being concerned in setting a light to a bit of an old shed, no size to speak of; so if the next thing we see of you is walking off between a pair of police constables, yourself you'll have to thank for it. I only hope poor Hugh won't be blaming me for letting you out of me sight this evening."

"Och, good luck to yourself and your pólis!" Mrs. Hugh said defiantly. "It's little I care who lit th' old rick, and it's little I care what any people's troubling themselves to think about it. I'd liefer be after doing it than not—so there's for you. But what I won't



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do is stop here listening to your fool's romancing. So good night to you kindly."

With that Mrs. Hugh flounced clattering up the little steep stairs, and hurled herself like a compressed earthquake-wave into her bedroom. Mrs. Mackay, following her, stumped along more slowly. "Goodness forgive me for saying so," she reflected, "but Julia's a terrific woman to have any doings or dealings with. She's not to hold or bind when she takes the notion, and the deer knows what she's been up to now; something outrageous most likely. The Lord Chief Justice himself couldn't control her. Beyond me she is entirely."

Nevertheless, her warnings were not without effect, and at their next interview she found her sister in a meeker mood.

It was when Mrs. Mackay was in the cow-house milking, before breakfast, that Julia appeared to her, hurrying in with a demeanour full of dismay. "Och, Bridgie, what will I do?" she said.

"What's happint you now?" Bridgie replied, with a studied want of sympathy.

"I'm just after looking out of me window," Julia said, "and there's two of the pólis out



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## QUIN'S RICK

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of the barracks below standing at the road-gate, having great discoursing with Dan Molloy, and about coming into this place they are. Ne'er a bit of me knows what's bringing them so outlandish early ; but I'll take me oath, Bridgie darlint, I'd nought to do, good or bad, with burning the rick. It might ha' went on fire of itself. Hand nor part I hadn't in it. So you might be telling them that to your certain knowledge I was up here the whole time, and sending them about their business—there's a good woman."

On further reflection Mrs. Mackay had already concluded that Julia probably was not guilty of incendiarism ; still, she considered her sister's alarmed state a favourable opportunity for a lesson on the expediency of behaving herself. Therefore she was careful to give no reassuring response.

" 'Deed, now, I dunno what to say to it all," she declared, " and I couldn't take it on me conscience to go swear in a court of justice that I knew where you might be yesterday late. More betoken there was the bad talk you had out of you about the Quins before you come here, that they'll be bringing up agin you now, you may depend. An ugly appearance it has,



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## DOINGS AND DEALINGS

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sure enough, the two of them coming over at this hour. As headstrong you are as a cross-tempered jennet ; but if you'll take my advice you'll keep yourself out of their sight the best way you can, till I see what they want with you, and then if it's a warrant they've got, I might try persuade them to go look for you somewheres else. That's the best I can do, and, of course, I can't say whether they will or no, but maybe——”

For a wonder Mrs. Hugh did take this advice, and most promptly, rushing with a suppressed wail out of the cowhouse and into a shed close by, where she crouched behind a heap of hay, the first hiding-place that presented itself to her in her panic. She had spent a great part of the past night in meditation on her sister's alarming statements ; and now the ominous arrival of the police put a finishing touch to her fright. How was she to escape from them, or to exculpate herself ? Bridgie evidently either could or would do little or nothing. At this dreadful crisis in her affairs her thoughts turned longingly towards her own house down below, where there was Hugh, poor man, who would certainly have somehow prevented her from being dragged off to



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## QUIN'S RICK

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Athmoran Gaol, even if he did believe her to have burnt the rick. Through the dusty shed window she saw two dark, flat-capped, short-caped figures sauntering up to the front door, whereupon with a sudden desperate impulse she stole out, and fled down the cart-track along which they had just come. Getting a good start of them, she said to herself, she might be at home again with Hugh before they could overtake her—and one of them, she added, as fat as a prize pig.

As Mrs. Hugh ran most of the road's two long miles, she was considerably out of breath when she came round a turn which brought into view an expected and an unexpected object. The one was Hugh walking out of his own gate, the other Quin's rick, still rearing its glistening yellow ridge into the sunshine.

"Well now, Julia woman, and is it yourself?" Hugh said, as she darted across the road to him. "What's took you to be tearing along at that rate, and without so much as a shawl over your head?"

"Thinking I was to meet you before this—kilt I am running all the way," she said, panting. "And I do declare there's the big rick in it yet."



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Hugh's face fell. "Whethen now, if it's with that same old blathers you're come back," he said in a disgusted tone, "there was no need for you to be in any such great hurry."

"Ne'er a word was I going to say agin it at all," said his wife, "and I making sure the constables would be after me every minyit for burning it down."

"What the mischief put that notion in your head?" said Hugh.

"I seen the blaze of a great fire down here last night," she said, "and I thought it would be Quin's rick, and they knowing I had some talk about it."

"Sure 'twas just the big heap of dead branches and old trunks," said Hugh, "that's lying at the end of the cow-lane ever since the Big Wind. It took and went on fire yesterday evening; raison good, there was a cartful of Wexford tinkers went by in the afternoon, and stopped to boil their kettle close under it. A fine flare-up it made, and it as dry as tinder; but I'd scarce ha' thought you'd see it that far. Lucky it is the old sticks was fit for nothing much, unless some poor bodies may be at a loss for firewood this next winter. Come along in,



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## QUIN'S RICK

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Julia, and wet yourself a cup of tay. You'd a right to be tired trotting about that way. And as for the pólis, bedad they'd have their own work cut out for them, if they was to be taking up everybody they heard talking foolish."

Not long after Mrs. Hugh had finished her cup, Mrs. Mackay arrived, alighting flurriedly from a borrowed seat on a neighbour's car.

"So it's home you ran, Julia," she said sternly. "Well, now, I wonder you had that much sense itself. Looking for you high and low we were, after the pólis had gone, that only come to get the number of our chickens—counting the feathers on them next, I suppose they'll be—and all romancing it was about anything happening the rick. But frightened I was out of me wits, till little Joey said he seen you quitting out at the gate. So then I come along to see what foolish thing you might be about doing next."

"She's likely to be doing nothing foolisher than giving you a cup of tay, Bridgie," Hugh interposed soothingly. "And mightn't you be frying us a few eggs in the pan, Julia? Old Nan Byrne's just after bringing in two or



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## *DOINGS AND DEALINGS*

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three fresh ones she got back of the Quins' rick, where our hins do be laying."

"'Twill be a handy place for finding them in," Mrs. Hugh said blandly. And both her experienced hearers accepted the remark as a sign that these hostilities were over.



“So Good-Luck came, and on my roof did light,  
Like noiseless snow—”







## *A White Roof*

AS they watched Art Donnelly at work in the mellow autumn sunshine, his neighbours repeatedly asked one another, rhetorically, whether had seen ever the like ; and none of them ever had. This could by no means be wondered at, for Art was engaged in whitewashing his thatched roof, a proceeding wholly unprecedented at Carrickfoyle, or anywhere else, to the best of everybody's belief. Consequently Art, cocked up on his step-ladder and board, was subjected to much comment from all the passers-by, whom that spectacle caught and kept stationary, as an obstructive stone catches sticks and straws on their voyage down a stream. Their criticisms were without exception unfavourable, and frequently took the form of a sarcasm or a warning. He was asked, for instance, if he didn't think he had got a hold of a wall with a queer sort of slant on it, and if he had a mind to see the lime burning holes in his good strakes of straw. To all these animadversions Art turned a deaf ear, while he



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## DOINGS AND DEALINGS

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kept on splashing and dabbing with his broad brush, out of his zinc bucket, as imperturbably as he could. During the last few months he had been learning to disregard public opinion, which he had already defied on a more important point than this misapplication of white-wash. For he was about to marry a Welsh girl, who lived in the Isle of Anglesey, not far from Holyhead.

Now to go widely beyond the parish, let alone overseas, for a wife, was considered by the neighbours a step not merely outlandish, but in some degree disparaging to them all. "Set him up then! Couldn't he find e'er a colleen in Carrickfoyle plenty good enough for the likes of him, that he must needs take and bring home a stranger out of nobody knows where?" Thus ran popular sentiment. Mrs. Murtagh O'Shaughnessy declared that Annie Price was as "quare, unnathural-sounding a name for a young woman to go by" as ever she had heard tell of; and old Peter-Paul MacSwiggen quite agreed with her, adding that supposing there were any such people as Prices, he had never come across them in all the days of his life.

None of these observations, however, availed



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## *A WHITE ROOF*

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to put Art in the least out of conceit with his matrimonial prospects. So far, indeed, was he from imagining his future wife to be unworthy of Carrickfoyle, that he only felt anxious lest she should find it difficult to content herself in such a place. His little house, set high up on a many-hued hill-side, certainly had surroundings very unlike those of the Prices' farmstead, dumped down amid the smooth-spreading, greenish brown flats of Anglesey; and he knew that Annie was strongly attached to her home. "It always does my heart good," she had said to him one day, speaking of a short absence, "to see our white roof coming into sight again." For the Prices' slates, like many of their neighbours', were covered with white-wash, and formed a wintry feature in the monotonous landscape. It was this remark that had put his present surprising task into his head. Personally he thought that a whitened roof had "a quare ugly appearance"; but that seemed to him of no consequence compared with the chance of having something about his house the sight of which might do Annie's heart good, "the crathur," and remind her pleasantly of home. Though slating was much too long and too expensive an operation,



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## *DOINGS AND DEALINGS*

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whitewashing he could easily manage, nor could he see why that should not be treated in that foolish way as well or as ill as anything else. Accordingly he resolved to make a job of it during the week before he should cross over to Holyhead for his wedding ; and a job of it he made.

But though Art could thus boldly disregard his neighbours in general, there was one person in particular whose view of the matter he found it impossible to consider unimportant, or to forecast as otherwise than strongly disapproving. For the person in question was his grandmother, the widow Gallagher, an old dame to whom everything unusual was as a rule abhorrent. Special circumstances obliged him to take this seriously into account. The fact was that of his small house and farm he had but a very precarious tenure, the will and pleasure, namely, of its actual owner, the widow. A bad attack of rheumatism had led her a few years ago to make it over to him, on the understanding that she might at any time resume its occupation, should his management seem unsatisfactory. Meanwhile she had withdrawn along with her orphan niece, Delia Magill, to live on an even smaller bit of pro-



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## A WHITE ROOF

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perty away down in Glenmena, whence, he rightly suspected, she at times looked back wistfully towards her abdicated domain, being still, despite her seventy odd years, an active and energetic woman. Therefore he did not fail to perceive how easily this new-fangled piece of work might give her a dangerous pretext if she really wished to evict him. That she would utterly condemn the innovation of a whitened roof was quite certain. " 'Twould be as inconvenient as anything if Herself was for putting one out now," he reflected, " when the few sheep's just begun to pay a bit, and with Annie coming home, and all." Nevertheless, since he was at this time disposed to be hopeful in his outlook, his meditations on the risk he ran ended with, " Sure, very belike she mayn't by good luck ever hear tell a word about it."

Such an event seemed to be well within the bounds of fairly probable good luck, seeing that the Widow Gallagher's dwelling was distant enough to make intercourse with Carrickfoyle a matter of considerable difficulty for an elderly person, and in the wintry days that were now drawing on. There took place, indeed, at the best of times little visiting be-



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tween the inhabitants of Glenmena and Carrickfoyle.

Soon after Art's wedding, however, Delia Magill came over to inspect the new Mrs. Donnelly, and made herself agreeable to the young couple in the hearty, off-handed manner which had gained her a reputation among many of her acquaintances for frankness and good-nature. Art judged it expedient to take the precaution of warning her against any reference to the whitewashed roof at home. "Me grandmother would be apt to think very bad of it," he said. Delia entirely agreed with him, and faithfully promised not to say half a word about it good or bad; nor did he see any reason to doubt either her friendliness or her discretion. But if he had only known, Delia was by no means amicably disposed towards his Welsh bride, whom she deemed an interloper, and for reasons of her own would gladly have beheld him ousted from the house at Carrickfoyle. Most people would have thought it scarcely possible to live further at the back of beyond than the Donnellys, perched up in a tiny hamlet on lonely Knockadare, looking down on what was a very small-sized village. Nevertheless to the few inhabitants of Glen-



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## *A WHITE ROOF*

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mena, situated at the other end of ten miles or so of a rough, steeply climbing road, Carrickfoyle appeared quite a lively and populous place. Earnestly did Delia, who hated her own company, wish herself domiciled there, and clearly did she perceive that her chances of being so all hinged upon the Donnellys' removal thence. Consequently now that Art's foolish act had given her such a capital opportunity for trying to bring this about, she'd be as great a gaby as himself, ran her reflections on her homeward way, if she didn't "do her endeavours" to get rid of him.

On her return, therefore, though she kept her promise to him in the letter by saying nothing about his treatment of the thatch, she broke it in the spirit by using all her powers of persuasion to stir her aunt into paying him a visit, a step which must ensure discovery. "If once she sees the holy show he's after making of the place, I'll bet anybody even six-pences that he'll get notice to quit before he's much older," Delia said to herself; and she triumphed secretly when, after tantalising hesitation, Widow Gallagher at length decided to accept the seat offered on Daniel Luby's car, which would soon be going Carrickfoyle ways.



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## DOINGS AND DEALINGS

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It was on a grey November afternoon that a passing farm boy disconcerted the Donellys with a message announcing the widow's imminent arrival: they might expect her towards twelve o'clock next day. The blow was a most unlooked-for one, as Art had made sure that they were quite safe from any such visitation until at least coming on spring, by which time the obnoxious coat of whitewash would have been well toned down. But now—there it was stark and staring, fit to dazzle the eyes out of your head, an object terribly conspicuous on the landscape far and wide. As Art trudged back to supper from some outlying fields, he ruefully noted that his grandmother would have it full in view the whole way up from below Keating's public, and would doubtless arrive "fit to be tied," in just the humour for "throwing them out on the side of the road." Mrs. Art suggested hopefully that the weather, which was unusually cold and threatening, might put her off the expedition altogether. Art, however, shook his head over the poorness of such a chance. "Once me grandmother gives out that she's going to do a thing," he said, "she's apt to not change her mind for all the wind and rain that's let loose in Ireland."



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## *A WHITE ROOF*

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Besides, 'twill be dry enough on us, no fear." So they went to rest with gloomy forebodings, uncheered by the black, north-easterly sky.

But when Art awoke on the morrow, he became aware of an unwonted brightness in the room, and on looking out of the window, what should he behold except a white world? He could hardly believe his eyes. Evidently it had snowed with diligence all night, and there had been quite a heavy fall. Struck by a happy thought, he hurried out of doors, where he saw that he was not mistaken. The roof was safely hidden beneath a glistening cover fully two inches thick, under which, as he hastened to assure his wife, "it might be painted sky-blue-scarlet or dunducketty-mud-colour, and nobody e'er an atom the wiser." A fall of snow in November is so rare in Carrickfoyle that this might be regarded as a very uncommon piece of good luck. It removed all the Donnelly's uneasiness, save a little fear that a preternaturally rapid thaw should set in, or lest the widow should be somehow prevented from coming while these singularly favourable conditions still existed. The former apprehension was gainsaid by the dry chilliness of the morning air, and the latter was ere long flatly contra-



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dicted by their visitor's arrival punctually at midday.

The Widow Gallagher's call upon her grandson's bride was a complete success. She had come, indeed, with a rather strong prejudice against the "furrin" Annie, who, notwithstanding, made from the first a very good impression upon her, which was confirmed by a remarkably excellent cup of tea, and a plate of buttery slim-cakes not to be surpassed. She had not tasted their equal, she said, since her own grandmother's days, one while ago. Her long, cold drive enhanced her appreciation of these refreshments, and also of the warmth that pervaded the snug, fire-lit kitchen. As she peered round it with critical eyes, she thought that she had never seen the place look in better trim. Especially admirable she judged the specklessness of the large flag-stones underfoot, where the divisions between them were neatly marked out with chalked lines, as she had always kept them ; and the fresh, spotted-muslin window curtains, the pattern on which was exactly the same as her own first ones had been when she was setting up house. To keep such a wide floor so elegant and decent, she reflected, would be quite beyond her nowa-



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## A WHITE ROOF

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days ; why, it was as much as she could contrive to see that Delia Magill didn't let even the small little room they had down below at Glenmena get too *clabbery* entirely. In short, her grandson and his wife seemed to be very satisfactory tenants, and she couldn't do better than leave them where they were.

When taking leave of them at the front door early in the afternoon, the widow expressed her views to Art and Annie. " I'd no notion this morning," she said, " that I'd find you snowed up here, for 'twas only a bit of a drizzle below at our place. Powerful harsh weather you do be getting on the hills. Howane'er, glad I am that I come ; because, telling you the truth, I thought in me mind that very be-like some quare alterations ye might be about making in it on me ; but sure you have everything fine. So if you don't stop here to keep things the way they are, 'twill be by no wish of mine you'll quit, Art avic. And there's my hand on it for you."

While she was speaking a sudden sunbeam darted out, and touched the deep-thatched eaves over her head, where rows of large drops swelled to a twinkling fall. Catching sight of them Art and Annie exchanged glances, with



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a sense of guilt and good fortune. A thaw evidently had just begun, and they were speeding their guest in the very nick of time. As they waved farewells to the receding car, Art said to Annie: "We're safe now, glory be to goodness! She won't go back on her hand-promise, that's sure and certain." All the same, his feeling of security was increased by every turn of the jolting wheels, which, little as he surmised it, were conveying a bitter disappointment to the perfidious Delia Magill.



“Lat me alone in chesing of my wyf,  
That charge upon my bak I wol endure.”







## *At a Safe Distance*

THE inhabitants of Rathkerin are fairly well used to the idea of emigration in some forms, and every now and then see with tolerable equanimity people going forth from among them bound for England, say, or the States. Such incidents are, no doubt, generally regrettable, but need not be regarded as inevitably entailing hopeless severance and perpetual exile. Even the Atlantic can be crossed so quickly nowadays that news of the departed not seldom arrives within a fortnight; and thenceforward penny letters sometimes continue to travel to and fro with a speed and regularity which encourages a belief in the possibility of a bodily return. But it is very different when a person sets off to one of those vaguely situated places which can only be described as "outlandish altogether," months intervening before the stay-at-homes may hope for tidings, and public opinion always running strongly against the likelihood of any further communications.



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Accordingly there was much lamentation, both expressed and suppressed, at the departure of young Frank Cahill for a region called the Argentine, about which few facts were ascertained except its extreme remoteness and inaccessibility. For Frank was uncommonly good-looking and agreeable, besides having a local renown as a sportsman and athlete, so that the gap made in the neighbourhood by his removal would not easily be filled. The loss, however, seemed unavoidable. His father's sudden death, in unexpectedly embarrassed circumstances, left him little choice of plans, his means scantily sufficing for his transport to the distant climes where he had heard of an opening—by worse luck, some of his friends considered.

Indeed, Lizzie O'Meara said to her sister Norah that she wished Frank had been left without money enough for travelling expenses, because then he would have had to stay in Rathkerin and contrive to make his living there one way or another. To which Norah objected: "Sure he might better be away altogether than fretting his heart out here, where he's not in reach of anything, like some creature tethered with a short rope."



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## AT A SAFE DISTANCE

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“Well, he’s pulled up his tethering-pin now for good and all, that’s certain,” Lizzie rejoined, and Norah replied: “Maybe he has.” But to herself she added: “And maybe he has *not*.”

If it had not been for a series of untoward events, these Misses O’Meara would hardly have numbered among their acquaintances this Frank Cahill, a small cattle-dealer’s son. For the O’Mearas belonged to a family of old-established quality, who, within living people’s memory had owned a large, though much-encumbered landed estate. They had, however, long been coming down in the world, and had, so to speak, descended several steps at a run during the lifetime of Lizzie and Norah’s father, whose unthrifty habits and convivial propensities led him into extravagance the disastrous results of which were swelled by numerous children and an invalid wife. Little of their earlier prestige now remained to them, and still less of any more substantial possessions.

One showery spring day, about two years after Frank Cahill’s emigration, important domestic affairs were being discussed in the parlour of Patrick Joseph Dermody, Rathkerin’s principal



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shopkeeper. The matter under consideration was nothing less significant than the marriage of their elder son. A rather curious feature in the conference was that Thomas, the person most concerned, appeared to be the most indifferent. These appearances were not at all deceptive. He took only a slight part in the discussion, and when he did intervene, it was but luke-warmly to side with his father, whose views were being opposed by Thomas's mother and three sisters. Mr. Dermody was a man who as a rule got his own way in managing matters of business, and though thus outnumbered and feebly supported, he would no doubt have done so on the present occasion, had not special circumstances been too strongly against him. The fact that Mrs. Dermody was just then recovering from a somewhat serious attack of pleurisy, which had greatly alarmed her family, gave her wishes unusual weight as well with her husband, who disapproved of them, as with her daughters, who shared them enthusiastically. She must therefore be allowed to have shown considerable judgment in selecting this particular time for the introduction of her favourite project, namely a matrimonial alliance between their Thomas



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## AT A SAFE DISTANCE

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and one or other of the two grown-up O'Meara girls.

It was a plan which she had long entertained, and a very propitious moment for carrying it out seemed to have arrived, now that Thomas had got a clerkship in Barrylone, the county town more than a dozen miles away, where he would presently be taking up his abode. What recommended the match to Mrs. Dermody and her daughters was the social ambition with which their minds were much occupied. Mrs. Dermody always gave herself the condescending airs of one who had married beneath her station in life; her neighbours could not think why, as "nobody had ever thought anything of them Clarkes." Nevertheless she had thoroughly imbued Minnie, Sissy, and Fan with her own sense of illustrious lineage, and consuming desire "to climb aloft and others to excel" in rank even more than in riches; and this alliance with the O'Mearas, aristocratic though impoverished, appeared to be an upward step which might most expediently accompany Thomas's establishment in a genteel situation away at Barrylone, where he could start on a new footing, unembarrassed by inferior acquaintances, with their tactless



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memories of a period less refined. Thomas's mother and sisters foresaw themselves visiting him there, discreetly drawing a veil over all connection with the vulgar Rathkerin shop, and entering the highest circles of society as relatives-in-law of an O'Meara of Letterennis. Against these advantages Mr. Dermody urged the sordid fact that Mr. Considine O'Meara, so far from having a penny to give his daughter, owed her proposed father-in-law, what with one thing and another, over a couple of hundred pounds; while, on the other hand, Thomas diffidently suggested that "maybe the O'Mearas wouldn't look at the likes of him." But this theory his mother scouted with disdain. "No fear of that," she declared. "Sure I've now and again let fall a word on purpose to poor Mrs. O'Meara, and plain enough it is that only too thankful they'd be to have a girl took off their hands, along with our account settled."

"A fine sort of fortune bedad," her husband grumbled, but grumbled vainly, as some judiciously interpolated fits of pathetic gasping and coughing proved to be more than a match for all his practical arguments. And the end of it was that on this very afternoon Thomas



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set off to call on the O'Mearas, in the character of suitor for the hand of either Lizzie or Norah, "according as might happen."

Long and lean, in his new broadcloth suit and low-crowned, black felt hat, Thomas Dermody looked rather like a theological student, "only something more stylish," his mother and sisters thought, as they watched him down the main street with admiring eyes. No admiration, however, awaited him when his journey ended three miles off in the O'Meara's untidy sitting-room. On the contrary, Lizzie O'Meara, the eldest daughter of the house, whom he found there furbishing up an old hat, considered his smooth, colourless visage and sleek black hair positively repulsive. It is true that in ordinary circumstances she had really no particular dislike for him, but the unflattering light that falls on an unfavoured wooer seemed to bring out innumerable defects. Lizzie was not unprepared for his advent in that capacity, because her mother had of late thrown out many broad hints, not failing to accompany them with strong remarks about the opinion which all sensible persons would have of any girl foolish and wicked enough to let slip the chance of



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becoming Mrs. Thomas Dermody. As Lizzie was fully determined upon being that reprehensible girl, she had made up her mind beforehand that when the time came she would refuse Thomas's proposal in an unambiguous manner, calculated to prevent any repetition of it, and thus to shorten the period of domestic storms, which she knew would follow. Therefore she now hastened to confirm her assertion that she would never dream of marrying him, if he was the only man left standing on his two feet in the width of the world, by adding : " And sure I'm promised to somebody else this long while," a statement for which no foundation existed.

" Himself's the lucky chap then," Thomas commented, as was conventionally befitting, but with rather less than quite mannerly conviction. " And who is he at all, might I ask ? " he inquired after a pause, which had obviously been spent in conjecture. Meanwhile it had suddenly occurred to Lizzie that speculations of the kind might have awkward consequences, so she replied on the spur of the moment : " Suppose it was Frank Cahill." For she thought to herself that about Frank, at such a safe distance, and not in the least likely to



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return or communicate from it, this might be said with very little risk.

"Frank Cahill? Why, nobody's heard tale or tidings of him this month of Sundays," said Thomas.

"Oh, haven't they not?" said Lizzie with ungrammatical mysteriousness.

"Well, he was always a very decent chap anyhow," Thomas said, displaying a generosity towards his rival, which perhaps appeared greater than it actually was.

"And don't you be letting on to anybody a word about it, Thomas, for your life," said Lizzie.

"I will not," said Thomas, rising to depart. He was on the point of asking her where he could find her sister Norah, when it struck him that there would be something too crude about this mode of procedure, and he refrained from doing so. Fortune, however, favoured him, since near the gate in the weedy shrubbery walk he abruptly came face to face with Norah O'Meara, and thus with a chance of carrying out his original design, which was "to get the business settled one way or the other, and be hanged to it," before he returned home.

Norah's way of settling it was singularly like



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Lizzie's, the most remarkable point of resemblance lying in her final declaration that she had already promised someone else; whereupon Thomas once more inquiring: "And who at all, might I ask?" received the answer: "Ah, well, I wouldn't say but it might be Frank Cahill."

"Och, don't be quizzing me," said Thomas.

"What talk is there of quizzing anybody?" said Norah.

"But sure it's the very same thing that your sister Lizzie's after telling me about herself and him," Thomas protested. He had honourably intended to keep Lizzie's secret, but, taken by surprise, he blurted it out, and gave himself away simultaneously.

"'Tis a great lie she was telling you then," said Norah. "And is it just after coming away you are from asking her first? Goodness may pity you, Thomas Dermody, 'tis yourself's the comical big gaby. If you aren't the laughing-stock presently of the parish, 'twill be no fault of your own. So good evening to you now; and I needn't bid you hold your fool's tongue, for it's my belief I might as well be bidding the old cow in the field there to quit switching her tail."



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Norah went her way laughing heartily, and Thomas turned homewards, with his feelings a mixture of relief and dismay, sprung from a consciousness of mingled success and failure. But they were to be still more variously compounded before he reached Rathkerin.

In the O'Mearas' lonely lane there was only one other dwelling, a small farm-house inhabited by a large family of Geraghtys, people who were even more needy than their nearest neighbours, and who were not like them credited with having seen any kind of better days. Indeed the Geraghtys seemed at all times to have been thought ill of, not without some cause, and their existing representatives were no improvement on the preceding generations. Rathkerin was consequently disposed to commiserate an orphaned niece, Nellie Magrath, "a nice quiet little girl," whom poverty had compelled to take up her abode with them. It was commonly believed that "they gave her none too good treatment among them all, and worked her like a black slave."

Now, as Thomas was passing the Geraghtys' red-rusted gate, a sudden shower came on so heavily that he sought shelter behind the sturdy elder-bush, which supported one of the



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tumble-down posts. As he stood there he reflected on his recent interviews "up at O'Meara's," considering with some mortification that he had certainly made a greater fool of himself than was necessary, but finding no slight comfort in the fact that he had failed to fetter himself for life to either of those large, florid, supercilious young women. A small, dark-eyed girl, who always looked shyly pleased at seeing him, and who, he was afraid, hadn't over-much of anything else to please her, would be far and away more to his liking, if only he could see any chance of his people's tolerating his views. But almost anything appeared less unlikely than that. And then in the middle of these not unwonted meditations, across the wet road came Nellie Magrath herself, with a heavy pail of well-water tugging at one hand, and rain-drops shining in her soft black hair, and her eyes suddenly shining more brightly than the rain-drops.

Her arrival did not so much divert the direction of his thoughts as swell and quicken the current with which they flowed. Swiftly his mind filled with a sort of rage against the circumstances which had set little Nellie Magrath to fetch and carry out under the rain, and toil



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and moil from morn till night, among a cross-tempered pack, from whom she got nothing better than ill-usage ; while he himself was to be provided with a position where by writing a few letters daily, and adding up a few accounts, he would earn enough to maintain her in what she would consider the height of comfort. And the only thing to hinder him from doing it was his mother's senseless notions about gentility. Hang gentility, Thomas said, and all such pestering trash. For that matter, what was there she need be making a fuss over in those O'Meara girls ? The very moral they were of their own mother's people, the McCoys, that had just been little pork butchers in the town of Sligo ; divil a thing else, and gone bankrupt at that. He had often heard the remark passed that old O'Meara had lost himself altogether before he took and married into the likes of them. But as for Nellie Magrath, genteel or no, you wouldn't easily find a prettier-looking slip of a girl ; and a scandalous shame it was to see her going about with a little thin wisp of an old shawl over her head, fit to give her her death of cold, when there were more stacks of good clothes than they well knew what to do with lying in the shop



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at home. Faith now, if he had the management of some things, they'd be entirely different.

Thomas felt so strongly on these points that he could not quite refrain from mentioning them to Nellie, and having once introduced the subject, he said much more than he had at first intended. In fact when the shower was at an end, and Nellie went off housewards with her splashing pail, she felt as if a glorious guardian angel had wonderfully flashed into her life, with promises to throw open for her anon the door of the truest paradise.

Meanwhile, however, anticipations far less radiant accompanied Thomas on his homeward way. It was impossible for him to be completely satisfied with his afternoon's work, in view of the violent disapprobation with which the Dermody household would regard his proceedings ; because it was also impossible for him not to consider that disapprobation a grave impediment. A marriage without his parents' sanction would seriously damage his prospects in life, as he would thenceforth, he well knew, be left unassisted to make the most of the Insurance office clerkship, which should otherwise merely have preluded his launch on



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a business career of his own, backed up by liberal supplies of capital "to put in it." Although the loss of this seemed by no means a trivial sacrifice, it weighed less with him, to do him justice, than the consideration of the effect which his untoward behaviour might have upon his mother's health. For Thomas was, apart from all interested motives, a dutiful and affectionate son. That in truth had been what had sent him on his reluctant wooing of the O'Mearas ; what had long withheld him from avowing, even to himself, his feelings towards Nellie Magrath, and what now loomed as the most insuperable obstacle in the way whither he would go. Yet it must be, on Nellie's account, got past without much delay, since to leave her indefinitely among "them Geraghtys" was not endurable, more especially after his decisive declaration.

As his home came in sight, he resolved that he would this evening divulge only the result of his authorised proposals. The collapse of her scheme for an aristocratic alliance was as much disappointment as Mrs. Dermody could be expected to sustain with any degree of composure ; if to the tidings were added the announcement of a penniless and disreputably



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connected daughter-in-law, who could say what disastrous consequences might follow? He must wait a while longer in hopes of some less unfavourable opportunity. Also he hoped that, contrary to his own suspicions, his father might not have some wealthy match up his sleeve, ready to produce when once the O'Mearas were out of the way. Altogether Thomas anticipated with gloomy confidence a tempestuous and contentious time.

His expectations were speedily and amply fulfilled. The news of his failure to win either of the O'Meara sisters was received by his mother with a prodigious outburst of wrath and lamentation; and when she had retired, sobbing and coughing reproachfully, to bed, his father hastened to unfold a plan for immediately setting about negotiations preliminary to Thomas's marriage with the as yet unseen daughter of Daniel Green, a prosperous neighbouring farmer, who "would as soon give a couple of hundred pounds down along with her as if they were a couple of old hens." Seeing that circumstances precluded Thomas from adopting this arrangement with an alacrity congenial to his father's mind, or rejecting it with a promptness congenial to his



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own, the day ended in general dissatisfaction.

It was intensified during the course of the week by disquieting rumours about the Insurance company which had offered Thomas employment, and the affairs of which were now stated, on apparently good authority, to be in a far from flourishing condition. In the present posture of his affairs the matter seemed to him a very serious one, making him all the less able to contemplate with equanimity any grave family quarrel, which might leave him most inconveniently destitute of resources. But next Sunday evening an acute crisis occurred, brought on by the intervention of a meddling friend, who called with the report that there was a deal of talk in the town about young Thomas Dermody and little Nellie Magrath getting married, because they had been met walking together in Big Tree Lane that morning after ten o'clock mass. From the dilemma in which he was thus set Thomas extricated himself so lamely and unconvincingly that all his family suspicions were raised to the highest pitch, and his mother developed symptoms threatening an imminent relapse.

Nor was it the Dermody household alone



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who found in these blustery May days a period of exceptional storm and stress. Among the O'Mearas prevailed strained relations, which led to much promiscuous wrangling. Lizzie's refusal of Thomas Dermody had come to her family's knowledge, bringing her into deep disgrace with her elders, who regarded her as a reckless thrower away of chances that might in some measure have mended their dilapidated fortunes. That they should take such a view appeared to her quite natural; but she was disposed to wonder why Norah wouldn't speak civilly to her these times, and looked as if she had suddenly bitten a sour apple whenever they met. Often enough they had both agreed that they would rather weed in the fields than marry poor Thomas Dermody. So Lizzie was puzzled, for she knew nothing of Norah's interview with Thomas, and had kept her own counsel respecting that untruth about Frank Cahill, of which she therefore supposed her sister to be unaware. Not that Lizzie had any grounds for thinking Norah likely to resent or disapprove of it. And indeed had it not been for special circumstances, Norah would have heard the fiction repeated with unconcerned incredulity. As it happened, however, Thomas's



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communication on the subject had been preceded by a very unusually prolonged pause in Frank Cahill's always scanty and intermittent correspondence, and a melancholy, discouraged tone had pervaded his last letter. Hence Norah, already oppressed with the burden of two years' anxiety and separation, was prone to despondent misgivings about everything, and now felt half inclined to surmise that Lizzie might actually also have a secret understanding with Frank, improbable and purposeless though such treachery appeared. Consequently she gave herself the benefit of the doubt, to the extent of deeming herself justified in assuming an aggrieved and hostile attitude towards the possible culprit, while bitterly congratulating herself on having never revealed her engagement, warily recognising the fact that "you never can tell what way things may turn out to make a fool of you."

Clouded days at this time had likewise set in for Nellie Magrath, whose fears lest her strange new happiness should prove really too good to be true were strengthened by the absence and silence of her distracted Thomas, as well as by the ill-natured jests and gibes of her unamiable kinsfolk. So that the harsh east wind, and



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the grim, leaden-coloured haze which it conjured up, symbolised appropriately enough the mental experiences of several people at Rathkerin.

Then one morning, while the weather showed no improvement at all, a marvellous change came over their moods. For in the middle of a capricious April shower, borne on a boisterous March wind, Frank Cahill made his wholly unexpected reappearance. And it was good luck that had caused his surprising return. Some investments of his had suddenly acquired a value which would enable him to start his long-desired horse-ranch without further delay, and he had thereupon straightway set off home to fetch out his sweetheart as a partner in his prosperity. One of Norah's brothers should, they arranged, accompany them, to the additional lightening of the family's many-headed burden. This, of course, sufficed to disperse the cloud which had been over-shadowing the O'Mearas in particular ; but it was not by any means the whole event. Along with Frank Cahill came a stranger of middle-age verging upon elderliness ; and who should he turn out to be except Andrew Haslett, mother's brother to little Nellie Magrath ? He, having emi-



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grated at an early age, and risen to great affluence, had entirely lost sight of his Irish brethren, until upon falling in lately with young Cahill, he had discovered the existence of his favourite sister's orphan girl. Now he had returned, a very wealthy bachelor, without encumbrances, openly avowing his intention that poor Molly's daughter should have as fine a fortune as any young woman in the countryside. As he was clearly well able to make good this promise, his niece found herself all at once raised to the rank of an important heiress, whose eligibility he enhanced by providing her discreditable Geraghty kin with the means of removing themselves to a distant colony.

It can easily be imagined how swiftly in these circumstances melted away every trace of opposition on the Dermody's part to their Thomas's attachment, once frowned upon with such severity. In fact they considered it a subject for sincere congratulation that he should so opportunely have been first in the field, and they thenceforward showed indefatigable zeal in assisting him to follow up his advantage. Mrs. Dermody, for instance, assured Andrew Haslett that she had looked upon his niece as a daughter long before there



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was any talk about Thomas thinking of her ; not but what Nellie Magrath had been the jewel of the world for him ever since the two of them were children going to school.

On the conscience of Mrs. Dermody a convenient untruth was the merest feather-weight, and she seldom gave one a second thought. Perhaps Lizzie O'Meara was less case-hardened; at any rate, she did certainly feel some embarrassment when unexpectedly confronted with the person about whom, in the belief that he would remain at a safe distance, she had told such a completely unfounded falsehood. Norah and Thomas, however, both behaved with magnanimous forbearance, and discreetly refrained from making any awkward disclosure, if indeed the episode had not in their pre-occupation altogether escaped their memories. And Lizzie's own mind was presently diverted to a more agreeable topic. For very soon after Thomas Dermody had brought home his richly dowered bride, it occurred to Andrew Haslett that he might as well find himself a wife to share his still abundant wealth, and he lost no time in making his choice of the eldest Miss O'Meara, who on this occasion had no need to account for a refusal by a mendacious



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excuse, seeing that her acceptance of his offer was genuinely joyful.

Thus Fortune must be considered to have dealt more kindly with at least three couples than she had at one time seemed at all likely to do ; and though Mrs. Dermody did entertain the opinion that Andrew Haslett might have found among his niece's three sisters-in-law a match far more suitable than portionless Lizzie O'Meara, even she, despite all her jealousy on behalf of Minnie, Sissy, and Fan, felt on the whole fairly well satisfied with the turn which affairs had taken.







“ὦ Ζεῦ, τί δὴ χρυσοῦ μὲν ὅς κ' ἰβδηλος ἦ  
τεκμήρι' ἀνθρώποισιν ὥπασας σαφῆ,  
ἀνδρῶν δ' ὅτ' ἔχρη τὸν κακὸν διειδέναι,  
οὐδεὶς χαρακτὴρ ἐμπέφυκε σώματι;”







## *A Bad Sixpence*

**I**N cold weather the third-class waiting-room at Gortgarry railway station is noticeably more frequented than at warmer times. This is not because the Gortgarryans travel more in winter, but because the glowing fire, which the porter keeps well stoked, then becomes a strong attraction for people who have little to do, and less to spend either on railway tickets or fuel. These latter visitors often seem anxious to shun observation from the booking-office, which opens a ground-glass window on them in one corner of the room.

On a snowy December afternoon, about half an hour before the next train was due, the bench along the wall opposite the fireplace accommodated three middle-aged men, an old woman, her youngish daughter-in-law, and small grandson. Three or four other men were lounging seatlessly about. The open door framed a strip of smooth, leaden sky and whitened platform. Both the Mrs. Hanlons and their right-hand neighbour, Paddy Mahon,



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had purchased railway tickets. Paddy was counting some coins, chiefly coppers. "I'll be hanged alive," he remarked suddenly, "if I likes the looks of this sixpenny at all."

"Are you after gettin' it off himself just now?" inquired Mrs. Hanlon, nodding towards the ticket office as Paddy displayed the sixpence on a broad protruded thumb.

"I was not," said Paddy. "I had the fourpence exact enough. I couldn't say how I come by this."

"Try will he change it," said Mrs. Hanlon; whereupon Jim Cluskey commented aside to Hughey Quinn: "Herself's the cute one, mind you."

Paddy crossed the floor and drummed on the opaque pane, but without satisfactory result. Toomey, the station-master, belonged to the tribe of officials who turn to the first-class and third-class windows faces as unlike each other as the two sides of a postage-stamp. So now he answered the request to be obliged with change of a sixpenny bit with a curt grunt, stating that he couldn't change half a farthing, which at least was verbally true; and Paddy clumped back discontentedly to his seat.

"A quare, yallery appearance it has on it,"



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## *A BAD SIXPENCE*

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Hughey Quinn said, taking the dingily discoloured coin, and making it revolve wheel-wise between his middle finger and thumb. "But I wouldn't say meself there was anything much ailin' it, except some jackass or other holdin' it in the flame of a candle, or maybe offerin' to melt it, just for divarsion. A good few there is that will be punchin' holes, and playin' the fool wid e'er a bit of money they can lay hands on. That's all I see amiss wid it."

Jim Cluskey, examining it in turn, dissented from this opinion. The smoke of ne'er a candle that ever was lit would be apt to give it such a dirty, dullish colour, and it felt more than a trifle light besides. He had a notion too that it looked unnatural small. Wishing to demonstrate the erroneousness of Jim's impression, Hughey fumbled another unsuspected sixpence from forth a profound pocket, and was triumphantly pointing out how "the two of them were the one size," as they lay on top of each other in the lid of his matchbox, when Paddy, inadvertently jogging his elbow, jerked them with a jingle to the floor, so that his proof ended in confusion.

They were easily retrieved, however, and young Micky Egan, a bystander, who assisted



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at the picking up, half jocularly suggested that Paddy Mahon should have a turn at pitch and toss with his doubtful coin. Paddy, who, being neither sanguine nor imaginative, had little taste for games of chance, flatly refused to fall in with this proposal. "Troth and bedad I will not," he said. "I'll need to be thinkin' a dale worser of it before I take and sling it away like an ould crooked button." And the elder Mrs. Hanlon, who, as connected by marriage with the youth Micky, considered herself privileged to improve the occasion, set about doing so in a discourse on the iniquity of gambling, from which Micky himself walked away, whistling, out of earshot some time before it was finished.

Meanwhile Paddy Mahon had stuck the troublesome sixpence in underneath the string tied round a brown-paper parcel containing a Norfolk jacket, which he had to repair for Mr. Patterson, and the material of which he hoped to match in Haganstown—Paddy being a "botcher" by trade.

"So the end of *him*," Mrs. Hanlon concluded, "was that he would be hanging about the yard there at Devlin's of a race day, lookin' for the chance of mindin' a horse or



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## *A BAD SIXPENCE*

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such, and glad enough to pick a sixpence up out of the mud, if e'er a one was threw him—aye, bedad, or a pinny itself. He that used to be makin' a fine brag of how he could play wid a pack of cards, every one of them printed on a ten-pound note, any day he pleased. Well, to be sure, 'twas the short work he made of his ten-pound notes, himself and his card-playin'."

"Very true for you, ma'am," said Jim Cluskey, "there does be no greater destruction for a young chap to take up wid than gamblin' and bettin', unless it's the drink. Rael pernicious that is. Look at poor Peter Mooney, that had three fortunes drunk before he got his death in Athboy Union, and buried by the parish, only for the McSharrys of Killymena, that was next to nothin' to him, makin' up the money. You didn't know them, ma'am? Livin' near me poor father's little place they was ould ages ago. Och now, them that's set on playin' and drinkin' 'll do anythin' good or bad to get the means, troth will they—except earn it honest. But young Egan wasn't wishful to hear a word you said agin it, ma'am, and that's an ugly appearance in a lad. Off he went wid himself in a great hurry, anyway, for some raison or other, whatever it was. And



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by the same token I must be steppin' along meself, when I've gave a tie to me ould boot-laces."

Stooping down, Jim Cluskey knotted up some loose strings, complaining that his brogues were leaking like a couple of crows' nests, and presently rose to depart.

As the snow outside muffled the clumping footsteps, Hughey Quinn said: "Herself had a right to be here before long; she's ten minyits over-due. Aye, bedad, and there's the ingine whistlin' at the signal-box."

This announcement caused a general move, amidst which Paddy Mahon's voice was heard exclaiming: "Musha good gracious! what's gone wid that unchancy ould sixpinny now? Divil a bit of it's in the fastenin' where I was after lavin' it."

"Slipped out it is belike," said Mrs. Felix Hanlon. "It aisy might. 'Twas no sort of place to be puttin' such a thing in."

"Sorra the slip it slipped," declared Paddy, "and it fixed as firm as glue. Besides, if it done that, on the floor it's bound to be, and where's the signs of it?"

A hurried groping and poking of sticks under the bench revealed none.



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## A BAD SIXPENCE

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"I stuck it there the way it wouldn't be mixed up wid a better one I have in me pouch," said Paddy. "Fall out of itself it couldn't, that's sartin, when nobody was movin' or meddlin' wid it."

"Nobody had any call to be, in coorse," Mrs. Hanlon said, with meaning. Then as it did not appear to be taken up, she added with increased emphasis; "I hope that young Egan had nothing to say to it; I *hope* he had not. But, as Jim Cluskey was sayin', he slunk off wid himself quare and suddint like—and very *quite*. And he might ready enough contrive to flick it out of the cord wid the tip of his finger, and he goin' by. I'd be sorry to think he'd take and do such a thing, if it wasn't only that he's so set on divilment, and won't be said by his betters." The remembrance of Micky's disrespectful withdrawal from her homily rankled in her mind. "Them sort 'ud do anythin' to get money to be wastin', as Jim Cluskey was sayin'," she quoted again appreciatively.

"It might be just a trick he was intendin' by way of a joke, suppose he touched it at all," suggested her daughter-in-law, who had no great liking for Jim.



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"May it never do him good, then! I wish he'd trouble himself to play his tricks wid somebody else's sixpennies," indignantly said Paddy, whose feeling about this particular coin was strongly "a poor thing but mine own."

"For the matter of that, I well know Jim Cluskey can take his own share of the drink betimes," Mrs. Felix Hanlon observed without much apparent relevance.

By this time the panting and hissing of the locomotive had begun to mingle obtrusively with their remarks, and everybody hastened on to the platform. Public opinion inclined to adopt old Mrs. Hanlon's conjecture about the fate of Paddy's sixpence, for she had a sort of oracular reputation among her neighbours. As the younger Mrs. Hanlon was passing out through the door of the waiting-room, a tug at the corner of her shawl made her exclaim sharply: "Grant me patience, Sonny! What are you at, reefin' me things off me that way?"

"Mawther," Sonny said in a hoarse whisper, "a while ago I seen ould Mr. Cluskey takin'——"

But his mother, being quite preoccupied with the business of conveying a heavy basket and bundle across the slippery snow, only



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## *A BAD SIXPENCE*

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said : " Och, whist moidherin' one wid what you seen," a rebuff which completely checked the communications of Sonny.

Alighting a couple of hours later back on the Gortgarry platform, she met Tom Reilly, who offered to give her a hand with her basket. On the way home he informed her with an exhilarated air that there was " just after bein' a fine ruction below at Corcoran's public, and Jim Cluskey thrown out of it."

" Was he, bedad," said Mrs. Felix, " and what for ? "

" A couple or so of glasses of whiskey he had," said Tom.

" And sure why would anybody be risin' a row over that ? " she said.

" Paying for them he was," said Tom, " wid a bad sixpence."

" Well now, I declare to goodness," averred Mrs. Felix, " himself's the notorious ould liar and slanderer, and a black hypocrit to the back of that."

The warmth of her indignation, and the terms in which it was expressed, might well have seemed to Tom Reilly hardly appropriate. But then he did not know all the circumstances of the case.







“The deceitfulness of riches.”







## *Fudy's Bribe*

SOON after six o'clock on a spring morning Terence Doran was out and about in his newly acquired farmyard at Knockester. It behoved him to be early astir, as four hay-carts stood ready loaded for Killane market, on which account, indeed, he was rather annoyed at seeing nobody in the haggart; they should have been setting off by now, yet not a carter had appeared. As he walked in a fidget down the narrow pathway between two weather-beaten ricks, he heard beyond them a muffled sound of voices, and a sharper clattering of feet on the cobble-stones, which made him think that his expected men were arriving. On emerging round the corner, however, he came in sight of nothing more to his purpose than young Dan Crilly, the ploughman's son, who was dragging a small girl, a sister, Terence believed, with some asperity across the yard.

"What are you at there, Dan?" he said, confronting the pair, while the child, as if



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encouraged by his appearance, began to struggle more violently.

"About shutting Judy up in the loft I am, sir, till the carts is gone," said Dan. His tone was quite matter-of-course; but Judy, watching the master's countenance out of an eye-corner, observed displeased surprise at this explanation, and forthwith set up a wild howl. She was a somewhat under-sized seven-year-old, with a shock of dusky red hair, too heavy for her head, obscuring a small wedge of a visage that looked hardly spacious enough for its big light blue eyes and many freckles. "Oo-oo-ooh," she shrilled, "the arm's wranched off of me!"

"Let the child go and run home to her mother out of this," said Terence; "you've no call to be scuffling about here." But Dan, who was not unlike his sister, with the differences of some dozen additional years, and reddish whiskers, kept his hold on Judy's arm. "If she got away," he said, "ne'er a one of the carts 'ud be thravelling out of the haggart this morning, that's certain. For nothing'll suit the little toad but to up and declare she seen Ody Hearn in it last night."

"Over in that corner I seen him," said Judy,



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## JUDY'S BRIBE

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pointing to a cart-shed on her right ; " leaning up agin the post he was, just as he might be this minyit." Dan jerked a startled glance in that direction. " Himself it was, for ne'er a body else it wasn't, *I* know."

" And who the mischief is this Ody Hearn ? " said Terence.

" Well, sir, it's a thing we're better not talking about," Dan said in a cautious undertone. " He's a one that shouldn't be in it, by any manner of means—and sorra a bit of him was last night, you young miscreant, you. But by all accounts he is now and agin."

" Then I'll make it my business to keep him out," said Terence. " I've no use for loafers hanging about the place. Just bring me word the next time anybody sees him here, and I'll give him a talking to."

Dan's stare betokened perplexity touched with horror. " Talking to Ody Hearn would you be ? " he said. " Sure 'twas before me father's time he got his death, falling off a load of hay he was lepping here in this yard."

" Oh, is it *that* sort of romancing you have ? " Terence said loftily.

" Romancing or no," said Dan, " you won't get a man to drive a yoke out of them gates



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this day if they hear tell a word of Ody being about, for it's a great sign of bad luck. There was Peter Sweeney, drowneded, man and baste, in the Ardoyle River crossing over with a load of turnips, a couple of years ago; and they say that Ody himself lent him a hand with harnessing, and he setting off. So Judy's going up in the loft."

"What put it into your head to be talking such nonsense?" Terence said reprovingly to Judy. But she replied firmly: "Ody done."

"Look here," said Terence, "if you'll be a good child, and run home quietly, and hold your tongue, I'll give you a penny to buy sugar-sticks."

"Och, the Lord help you, sir," said Dan; "is it thinking to pacify her you are with pennies? Bedad now, if you stuffed the mouth of her full of them itself, they wouldn't keep her off gabbing, when she's took the notion, as you might aisy tell by the ugly look of her."

The strong conviction with which Dan spoke was grounded on intimate knowledge of Judy's character, and intensified by the fact that her idiosyncrasies were just now threatening to overthrow certain plans of his own. An intricate web of circumstances, connected with



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## JUDY'S BRIBE

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negotiations about a bit of land and an elder brother's marriage, did in fact make it seem much to Dan's advantage that John McEvoy, the carter, who was acting as go-between, should visit Killane that morning; but Dan well knew that if Judy's inopportune story got about, nothing would induce John to start, he being a firm believer in Ody Hearn, and a distant cousin of the ill-fated Peter. As for Judy, her way of tucking in her chin with a quick nod, and then peering upward through a fuzz of hair, could not be thought likely to inspire confidence.

"Listen now, sir," Dan said desperately, "here's the men coming up the cow-lane; we've no time to waste in fooling with her." He tightened his grip of Judy, and was moving off, when she clutched one of the rough elm-trunks on which the rick rested.

"I'll let roars out of the windy up there," she said, pulling back; "they'll hear a mile o' ground—all about seeing Ody. But if you took me driving along with you, to be seeing the big clock, and me granny, and everything in the town, never a word I'd let on about Ody at all at all."

Dan stood still, and glanced doubtfully



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## DOINGS AND DEALINGS

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from her to Terence. "Crazy, like she is, sir, this long while about getting a jaunt into town," he said. "No great differ she'd make atop of one of the loads, and 'twould be a sure way to keep her quiet, for she's wit enough to know what she'd get by talking."

"Why, then, let her go," said Terence, "so long as she doesn't break her neck."

"No fear," said Dan; "she's a deal too cute. I'll put her on me own cart."

Thus it was settled. Judy's large eyes, hitherto rather shifty in their shining, beamed thereat with the tranquil serenity of planets through her tangled locks, but kindled into the scintillating brilliance of veritable sun-stars when Terence, groping in his pockets for a penny, could find, to her high fortune, nothing less than a silver sixpence, with a present of which he left her bewilderedly enraptured. "The worst of it is," he remarked aside to Dan, "that she'll be apt now to make up some such story whenever she has a fancy for a jaunt."

Dan, however, replied again with confidence: "Och, no fear of that. I'll take the pot-stick to her the first Ody Hearn I hear out of her mouth, once we get home."



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## JUDY'S BRIBE

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There was some grumbling among the three other men at the addition of Judy to their party. John McEvoy expressed their general sentiment when he declared that they'd plenty to do to get their bastes along the likes of such a road at all, without having brats stuck on top of them, to the back of everything else. And his opinion was not unreasonable. The road was beyond dispute extremely bad—ill-planned, ill-made, full of difficult hills and hollows, where the horses' heavy feet slid perilously on swelling bosses and slanting, slippery streaks of loose stones. But Judy, perched up high on the first cart, which Dan was leading, sat far above any cognizance of stumbles, jolts, and objurgations. She was rapt in dreams of unknown delight, a silver key to which lay in her hand.

After floundering down a series of short, abrupt dips, the head of the struggling procession arrived at the ugliest corner on its way: the brow of a long, steep hill, where sheer, unfenced banks on the right offered a precipitous route to the furzy, boulder-strewn field full twenty feet beneath. Here something went wrong with Dan's load. A rope must have got slack, or the weight have been unskilfully dis-



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tributed ; at any rate the brownish crest of it began to nod with alarming top-heaviness, of which Dan was apprised by warning shouts from his comrades in the rear. He pulled up in a hurry, and called to Judy :

“ You’d a right to be getting down out of that, Judy—on the far side. Quick now. Swing yourself on by that rope there, till I can catch a holt of you. . . . Och, take your two hands to it, child, for the honour and glory of God ! ”

But take her two hands to it Judy would not on any account ; because one of them was occupied by the silver sixpence, and rather than relinquish that she would have let her head drop off her shoulders. And the consequence of this penny-wise policy was that somehow, losing her hampered grasp of the rope, she fell helplessly amid a cloud of floating hay down into the rocky field such a long way below.

Into the nearest cabin they carried her, far more seriously damaged than the hay, which could be tossed up again on forks, none the worse for its tumble ; and a keen-eyed colleen having descried Dr. White’s hat bobbing along between the stone walls of a distant lane, a



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## JUDY'S BRIBE

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swift-footed gossoon legged it in pursuit, and fetched him across the intervening bog-land to the scene of Judy's mishap. He pronounced it to be an irremediable one.

"Better not attempt to move her now," he said. "It can't be more than a very short while."

Dan stood ruefully beside the woman-of-the-house's bed, on which Judy lay looking nearly as if she were asleep. For many minutes she did not stir, and then it was only to open her clenched left hand, which she did with an effort, disclosing the sixpence still glittering in her palm.

"Can't you take it away out of that, Dan?" she said with feeble querulousness. "What's the use of it when a body's all broke in bits?"

"I'll just be keeping it then for you till they have you mended again, Judy jewel," Dan said, extracting the little bright coin with large clumsy fingers.

"You can't be putting me up in the loft now I'm broke," Judy said more cheerfully, turning to another aspect of the situation. "And I did see Ody Hearn in the yard last night. Ody Hearn I seen standing under the cart-shed."



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## DOINGS AND DEALINGS

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"Aye did you, alanna," Dan admitted remorsefully. "Sign's on it, sure enough; you did so."

"And I hear the big clock in the tower in the town a-striking of itself," Judy said drowsily; "striking and striking and striking, like a baste of an old |bee it is humming in me ears."

"To be sure now, yourself was a great one ever for seeing and hearing things, Judy," Dan averred. Half an hour earlier the compliment would have pleased her vastly, but it came belated. She saw and heard no more.

"'Twas a bad job," he said to himself presently, as a confused sound of lamentation approaching from without heralded the arrival of the rest of his family. "If it wasn't only for that, safe she might be up in the loft there this |minyit. A bad job it was entirely that we didn't mind Ody Hearn."



“Of calling shapes, and beckoning shadows dire,  
And airy tongues that syllable men’s names.”







## *By the Whitethorn Bush*

DENIS MCGLYNN

**A**YE to be sure ; why wouldn't we sit here a while by the pool, where we'll get the shade of the big thorn bush ? There does be a fierceness now in the sun, and small blame to it, drawing towards the latter end of May. And 'tis a long pull for yourself, sir, all the way up from Ballynahinch.

DERMOT O'KEEFE

For that matter, my lad, I'm as well able to be tramping every step of it this minute of time, praise be to God, as ever I was when I'd no more age on me than yourself has.

DENIS MCGLYNN

Troth, are you, sir. But, all's one, I'd as lief be taking the weight off my legs for a bit.

DERMOT O'KEEFE

To be just looking round the old pool I stopped, that I well knew before your father's son was born, or like enough, your father's self.



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DENIS MCGLYNN

Then 'twill be the long time you're out of this place, sir ?

DERMOT O'KEEFE

Too long, too long altogether. Better than fifty year it is, anyway.

DENIS MCGLYNN

And plenty of changes you're apt to be noticing in it ?

DERMOT O'KEEFE

I am so, my lad, and too plenty. Not but what there's a deal of things in it yet the very same way I left them. . . . Look you now at the clear water lapping round in under the hollow of the bank : for any differ I see, it's about setting off to school Paudeen, and Rose, and myself might be, along with Molly Carr and Larry O'Rourke, and delaying here for to get a trifle of diversion wetting ourselves in the pool. Sure now the black of it's drifted over with them weeny leaves off the whitethorn, that would be swimming on it ever, when the blossom was falling.



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*BY THE WHITETHORN BUSH*

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DENIS MCGLYNN

Coming down earlyish it is this year. The air was thick with it this morning, and I going by here in a shower of rain.

DERMOT O'KEEFE

Grand little boats we let on they were, when they got floating about. Molly would have it they were something liker in theirselves to crinkled white saucers; but we'd liefer they would be boats. Fine contending we had, trying who of us would start the biggest fleet of them, and they all to be rightly loaded. No easy matter it was to be putting the cargo on board a one of them. A short length of a split straw, by way of a plank, or maybe a couple of gold balls out of a buttercup, or the least drop of water off the point of a blade of grass, was the most e'er a one would carry; if you offered to be putting in aught more, round she'd spin, and down she'd go. . . . I mind now Molly herself was the best of us at that job. I give you my word, if I shut my eyes this minute, I'd see her there forenent us, with her bit of a hand a-stretching out to be dusting over the water off her finger and thumb some little



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## DOINGS AND DEALINGS

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grain of sand fit for a lepracaun's pinch of snuff.

DENIS MCGLYNN

A queer botch you and I'd make of any such work, sir, nowadays, with the clumsy broad tops on our fingers.

DERMOT O'KEEFE

We would so, avic. 'Deed then, telling you the truth, somewhiles I do be thinking 'tis a queer botch I made of everything good and bad, taking off to the States, and stopping there all the days of my life. And if it wasn't only for Molly herself taking up with Larry O'Rourke, sorrow the foot of me ever would. But sure 'twas him she liked, and there's the whole of it; I seen the way it was. . . . Could you tell me is there any people of the name—O'Rourke—living hereabouts in these days?

DENIS MCGLYNN

To my own knowledge ne'er an O'Rourke is there in it now at all. A very old widow woman there was lived over beyond Glenowen, but she's dead this many a year, and I heard tell she was one of the Farrells of Moynish.



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*BY THE WHITETHORN BUSH*

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For the matter of that, ne'er a Carr I know of  
in it either.

DERMOT O'KEEFE

Very belike they all of them went across the  
water too, the way I done.

DENIS MCGLYNN

But sure then, sir, wouldn't you be apt to  
see them there yourself ?

DERMOT O'KEEFE

Musha, is it in the States ? Whethen now,  
man-alive, it's mighty simple you are. Two  
people is as apt to light on one another out  
there as you'd be to put your hand again on  
the same little weevil of a gnat, if you was  
after letting it loose among the swarms of  
them dancing through-other over the loughs  
down yonder below of a hot summer evening.

DENIS MCGLYNN

My soul to glory ! A great thronged place  
it must be entirely.

DERMOT O'KEEFE

You may say so. But it's little thought we  
had in our minds of the size of the world that



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## DOINGS AND DEALINGS

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time, when we would be sitting here in a row, like finches on the top of a hedge, till we were late for school, and our books and bags lying on this end of the bank, where I could reach my hand to them if they was there now.

DENIS MCGLYNN

Then I should suppose, sir, none of you would be frightened with ugly stories about the pool the way we ourselves did be, and the children all do be yet ?

DERMOT O'KEEFE

What stories at all ? Divil the talk of a story, ugly or no, was there about it in my time.

DENIS MCGLYNN

Well now, plenty of stories is in it since ever I remember. And some puts one shape on them, and more puts another ; but no manner of doubt any of them has that there does be a young woman seen now and again, standing over yonder underneath the thorn bush, where the old roots of it are like as if they was feeling after the water, with footing for a body on the sod of grass between them, and a gap in the branches overhead



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*BY THE WHITETHORN BUSH*

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DERMOT O'KEEFE

And why to goodness wouldn't a young woman stand there? Gathering herself a bunch of the blossom she might be, and no need for any great talk about it.

DENIS MCGLYNN

Och, God help you, sir! Sure ne'er a one she is that had a right to be seen here, or anywhere else in this world. How would she, after all that length of time? 'Tis the wonderful old-age she'd have on her for a young woman. Some say 'tis a girl was got drowned over fifty years back in one of the loughs. But in that case it's more than I know myself what would bewitch her to be coming back here, in place of to where she got her death. And others have the story that she fretted herself out of her wits, or her life, because a boy she'd set her heart on took off away with himself to some foreign parts, and was never seen again. How-ane'er, whatever the truth of it is, you'll find a good few that would sooner not be delaying here by night or by day.



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## DOINGS AND DEALINGS

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DERMOT O'KEEFE

I wouldn't wonder if it was just a sort of *raumish* some folk made up a-purpose to hinder their children of paddling round the pool, and drowning themselves falling into the deep water.

DENIS MCGLYNN

You'd scarce think that, sir, if you knew the many that I do, young and old, who will be going about a long couple of miles, most days of their lives, sooner than to come within an ass's roar of this place. And by the same token, it's what I'd be sorry to take upon myself to bid anybody do, after some things I heard tell. For you couldn't say but 'twould be apt to bring him a black misfortune. The rights of it all nobody knows ; but, anyway, this much is certain, that every mother's son happening to get a sight of Herself who does be in it—between us and harm !—has to be stopping here till he shouts his name across to her ; a foot he can't stir to go forwards or backwards till she has that off him ; and then she will be letting him pass by. But whatever *comether* she puts on him, ne'er an hour's luck afterwards he gets for as long as he does be called by



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*BY THE WHITETHORN BUSH*

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that same, and a short time it mostly is. Signs on it; no great while ago young Michael Kennedy pulled his horse up beside me, a bit down this road, and he in a lathering gallop, to let me know that what I'm talking about was just after happening him. And that was only the day before his little black mare broke his neck on him, jumping short at Mercerstown Races.

DERMOT O'KEEFE

Troth now, it's queer and foolish the brute beast was, let alone the man, to be at the bidding, there or here, of the likes of that one.

DENIS MCGLYNN

Foolish or no, if I'd any expectation of seeing her, put myself in the way of it I wouldn't. But passing by I am so often, 'tis my belief she wants no doings or dealings with me at all events, and a good job too. 'Twould be hard to say what chance a man, wise or simple, could have against her, that might be able to draw him over to her with a strong charm he knows no more about than if he was a fish swimming in at the mouth of a net. So for that reason I'm thinking the worst could happen him would be if she called——



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DERMOT O'KEEFE

Whisht, man, whisht! Glory be to God, there she is herself. At the foot of the white bush, on the edge of the black water, standing she is like an image in its niche. But herself it is, and beckoning across to me, and calling—sure you heard her? “Dermot O’Keefe” she’s calling clear enough. . . . Quit a hold of me, you young fool—aye, that’s better. It’s Molly herself, I tell you. I’m coming, Molly, straight over to you I’m coming, *stoireen machree*: sure ’tis nobody only myself you’re looking for all this long time.



“A little dearer than his horse—”







## *Wishers at the Well*

THE wishing-well lies at the secret heart of Glen Creevy, which is just a deep, narrow cleft in the long grass-slopes of Knockmena, so completely masked by a grove of spindle-stemmed trees, that a few yards from the head of the footpaths leading down steeply into it at either end, nothing appears to suggest the existence of such a fissure. Indeed, to believe in it becomes rather difficult, when once you have emerged again on to the open hillside, where there is seemingly no cover for anything larger than a rabbit or a partridge.

The Glen's sheer rock-walls are hung with matted tapestries of enormous ivy-trails, by which some of the trees, for the most part firs and birches, have been caught and nearly killed. If any rough wind shook the ruddy and silvery trunks of these half-strangled ones, they would fall, dragging each other down in an entangled heap; but only their very tops reach, as it were, to the surface, and scarcely a breath stirs below in the cliff-locked creek. A great boulder



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## DOINGS AND DEALINGS

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set in a little hazel-copse, where the nuts never ripen for want of sun, screens from the rare passers-by the wishing-well in a doubly sequestered nook; a crystallly gleaming trickle from the cliff towering above it fills the small round basin, fringed with ferns luminously green.

Modest indeed is its fame as a miracle-worker. In fact on but one day of the year does it lay claim to any magical properties beyond a merely vague luckiness. That one day is the festival of its patroness, Saint Earma, when, folk say, anybody who, wetting a hand in its water, cries aloud thrice on the name of a beloved object, will be found to have put an efficacious *comether* or spell on the person desired. Yet even this inducement attracts not more than a scanty number of visitors to the solitude of Glen Creevy.

On one of these anniversaries they included Fanny Flynn, the maid-servant at Mahony's Farm, a stirring girl, who was up and ready for the expedition before five o'clock in the morning. This early start, which was necessary because she must be back by six o'clock to feed the pigs and poultry, entailed no serious hardship in that radiant mid-May weather,



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## WISHERS AT THE WELL

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and Fanny set off in excellent spirits, singing *Rory O'More* as she went. Evidently her love-affair was not of a depressing nature. On the way she stopped to pick up Matty Riall, who worked at a neighbouring farm-house. Matty seemed rather sleepy, and not over-zealous about going, but Fanny drew her resolutely along for company, not liking to pass quite alone by an intervening fairy fort, while the shadows were still so dark under the hedges, and stretched so far across the empty green fields.

As they made for the Glen, Fanny talked with the utmost frankness about the purpose of her visit to the wishing-well. She intended to call for Jim Moriarty of Rathorel. "Just no more than a chance it is," she said; "but it might be worth while trying; and to be sure ne'er a one can I afford to lose at all, and he setting off over to England for the hay-cutting some time next month. If he goes along with himself the same way he done last year, with not so much as a look at me out of the small end of his fool's eye, I declare to goodness I don't see what else it's apt to be except the finishing desolation of me misfortunate life," Fanny averred. But the effect of this tragically



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romantic forecast was marred by the complacent expression which pervaded her jolly round face, and almost in the same breath she exclaimed: "Whoo! Look you there, Matty! A corncrake's after running out from under the hedge yonder. I'll bet twopence she has a nest full of eggs in a one of them tussocks."

Fanny darted off head foremost in quest of it, but after a hurried examination of two or three grass-clumps desisted, and returning to the path at once picked up the thread of her discourse. "I can't be wasting me time now looking for it. We'll take another ten minyits or better getting to the well, and there'll be some 'Hail Marys' to say when I have the shouts let, to make whatever's put on him stick. So we'd a right to step on."

"Suppose some person heard you calling?" said Matty.

"Well, suppose anybody did," said Fanny. "There's nothing agin that."

"You to be shouting after a boy that way," said Matty. "'Twould sound quare enough. Sure now Jim Moriarty might by chance be going past himself, and hear you, for anything you can tell, he that's very belike not thinking of you at all. Ashamed of me life I'd be."



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## WISHERS AT THE WELL

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"I wish in me heart he would be listening somewhere around; nothing could happen luckier," Fanny said, quite unabashed, "for it might put the notion in his head to think of saying something sensible. Not thinking about me? Why, to be sure, plenty he's thinking about me this long while back, if only he had the wit to spake his mind. But he might as well have the handle of an ould dried-up pump stuck in his head by way of a tongue, for aught he gets out of it. That's how he was ever, and I know him since the two of us could stand straight on our feet. Just a good bit of a stir-up like he wants. 'Deed telling him as much meself I'd be before now, if it wasn't I liefer wouldn't have his sisters, and me own sisters, and all the rest of them other ones, casting it up to me that I had to ask him outright. And I wouldn't wonder if it come to that at the heel of the hunt. But aren't you going to give e'er a call for yourself, Matty, when you're there? It could do no harm, anyway."

"Indeed, and I will not then," Matty said, with as much disapproval as there was room for in her face, which had nothing large-sized belonging to it, except a few freckles and a pair of dark grey eyes. "Long sorry I'd be to



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make such a show of meself, even if there was anybody I'd give a brass farthing for, let alone screeching after him like a demented ould banshee."

"Musha, long life to you, how grand you are entirely!" Fanny said with sarcasm. "But it's my belief there's ne'er a banshee living in Ireland demented enough to not sooner have a little house of her own than to be feeding Mrs. Halloran's pigs. Don't tell me you couldn't think of somebody. Aisy you could. It's just that you're not wishful I'd be hearing; but I promise you faithful sorrow a word I'll let out to man or mortal."

"It's nothing to me what you believe, or what you let out," Matty replied, walking on ahead with her chin in the air; and they proceeded thus until they had come close to the well.

But just at the point where their twisting footpath began to run straight towards it, Fanny seized Matty by the arm with a jerk which nearly took her off her feet. "Look there!" whispered Fanny. "I give you me word it's young Hugh Bracken coming along from the other end. About letting a call he is, you may depend, and great luck 'twill be if



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## WISHERS AT THE WELL

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we get the chance of listening unbeknownst. Sure, then, raising the laugh on him we can be finely. Slip in among the bushes before he spies us."

Into the cover of the leafy hazels Matty fled, swift and noiseless as a rabbit into its hole, while Fanny warily followed. Hugh continued to advance, evidently nothing recking of the eavesdroppers. So much at ease was he that he whistled blithely as he approached the well. There he dipped a hand into the water, and sprinkled its drops sparkling on the sun-lit, shadow-flecked air. "Maggie Ryan!" he called lustily, "Maggie Ryan! Maggie Ryan!" Then he seemed to chuckle a little, and resuming his shrill-noted tune, he withdrew by the way that he had come.

The hidden girls had listened with bated breath. As soon as she could safely do so, Fanny laughed heartily. "So Maggie Ryan it is with him," she said. "Well, to be sure! 'Deed now, when he began first, 'twas yourself, Matty, I thought he'd be calling; but Maggie Ryan he said plain enough, whoever she may be at all. Ne'er a one of the name I know hereabouts. But I must run along and let me own shouts, for Herself at home 'll be raging



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## DOINGS AND DEALINGS

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mad over the calves' milk if I'm back late."

Fanny ran along, and lost no time in making the Glen resound distinctly with Jim Moriarty's name. When she returned to the place of ambush, however, she found that Matty Riall had gone on so rapidly as not to be overtaken until they were once more in the corncrake field.

"It was yourself was in the great flurry," Fanny said, panting up behind her, "that you couldn't stand a couple of minyits."

"I was thinking of the pigs," Matty replied, hurrying on still with her head in her close-drawn shawl.

"Well, belike I'd best think of mine too," said Fanny. "And I'll take the short cut across the corner here, so good-bye to you. . . . 'Twas the quare pigs she was crying her eyes out over," Fanny reflected as she turned away. "I wonder now if the crathur had e'er a notion in her mind about Hugh Bracken. Himself and his 'ould Maggie Ryan!"

Towards sunset on the next day, Matty Riall was shoo-ing a party of errant ducks down the cow-lane to their pond, when who should be



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## WISHERS AT THE WELL

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looking over the gate of Long Cryarks but Hugh Bracken himself? At sight of Matty he swung himself across the top bar, alighting with a thud, which seriously alarmed the ducks, and made her say severely: "There now, see what you're after doing!"

"Sure what matter?" said Hugh. "'Twill only encourage them into the water. Waiting here I was for a chance to be spaking to you."

"Were you so?" Matty said. "I wonder you were'nt too much took up with *Maggie Ryan*."

It was Hugh's turn to receive a shock, though less demonstratively than the ducks, which were still flopping. "Och, you little villain," he said, half amused, half rueful. "Have you heard tell of that already, and it only on the evening paper?"

"I dunno what's on the evening paper," said Matty, "but 'twould be hard for anybody to not hear tell of her that by chance was within an ass's roar of the Glen yesterday morning early."

At this retort Hugh's disconcertion visibly increased. "May the saints have me soul in glory! So that's come out too. Well, to be sure, but I was the quare fool, for I took the



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## DOINGS AND DEALINGS

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notion in me head that the ould well might bring me a bit of good luck. And in place of that, there she goes and breaks her neck at the first lep."

"Who broke her neck?" Matty said, jumping herself. This conversation seemed to abound in startling statements.

"Why, who else except the Major's Maggie Ryan, that I had a straight tip to put all I could on for the Lambertstown Cup? A pocketful of money I stood to win, if she'd done as she was expected. And 'twould have been uncommon handy. Because then what would hinder you and me of furnishing the little house we had the talk of before Christmas, only me poor mother being took sick, and lying that long, run away with all me savings. And she more than a trifle contráry in her temper, or else asking you I might be to put up with us living a while along with her. Troth and bedad Maggie Ryan was the contráry crathur as well. So now all I can do is go over to England for a harvesting job. But it's with something in me pocket I'll be coming back again, please goodness."

"Sorrow the differ it makes to me what you have in your pocket at all," Matty said.



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## WISHERS AT THE WELL

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The bearings of this remark were certainly ambiguous, and Hugh looked at her for a moment with some anxious doubt as to its significance. However, the result of this scrutiny was that he interpreted it in a quite satisfactory sense. "I declare, Matty alanna," he asserted gleefully, "there isn't a little girl to aquil you in the length and breadth, backwards and forwards, of the whole of Ireland."

Scarcely had he spoken, when a sound of scurrying feet approached down the lane, and from round the corner Fanny Flynn burst in upon them. "Och, there you are, Matty," she said, "and Hugh Bracken along with you. So you'll know all about Maggie Ryan—but sure what matter? I run over to tell you, the minyit I'd done laughing. From the young McGowrans I heard it, and 'twas nigh being the death of me: you and me consaiting the baste was a sweetheart he had! Well, I see the two of yous is as right as rain, and I won't be interrupting yous. Only d'ye know, Jim Moriarty and meself are after making it up at last. But nobody can say I asked him. I just told him, by way of a joke, that there was the quarest echo entirely in Glen Creevy 'Sure yesterday,' says I to him, 'calling at the



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well I was for ould Peter Clancy, and if I was, what else come back, as plain as you could spake, except *Jim Moriarty?* ' says I. And with that he up and said it was a dale the sinsiblest echo ever he heard tell of. So straightways I bid him go spake to me father about me bit of a fortune, and he's went. Sure now I'm thinking the wishing-well done all of us a good turn."



“ And by and by a cloud takes all away.”







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MY friend Dermot Elrington was a young Irish artist upon whom Fortune may be considered to have smiled broadly, since, besides much early success in his chosen career, he had become happily engaged to a very charming girl, in beauty, birth, and wealth all that could be desired, and far more than could have been reasonably expected, by even so rapidly rising a man. In fact the current of his life had hitherto flowed so smoothly that a superstitious or apprehensive person might by this time have begun to forebode some rude interruption on the part of unheeding chance, or resentful Providence, grudging at a mortal's prosperity. As Elrington, however, was not addicted to self-torment, and I knew of nothing untoward arisen in his circumstances, I felt puzzled when one October afternoon he entered my study in a most unwontedly dejected mood. A lovers' quarrel occurred to me, naturally enough, as antecedently the likeliest explanation, but a few remarks judiciously thrown out



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drew from him evidence that this conjecture must be given up ; and it was some time before the real cause of his gloomy looks became apparent. It then seemed such an inadequate one that my curiosity was increased rather than diminished by the discovery. For in the course of conversation he showed that he was worrying himself seriously about an illness, a sort of comatose nervous fever, from which he had suffered in the preceding year, upon his return to Dublin after an autumn sketching tour. His recovery had been swift and complete, but, as is quite common in cases of the kind, the attack had superinduced total forgetfulness of everything that had taken place for some time before its coming on. He was aware, from external testimony, that he had spent several weeks in farmhouse lodgings, near a Kerry village ; but for his own internal consciousness that particular fragment of Space and Time had simply been annihilated, a fact which now appeared, for no sufficient reason at once ascertainable, to weigh heavily on his mind. I was at a loss to imagine why it should suddenly have begun to do so, after the lapse of a whole twelve month, during which he had not seemingly given a thought to the subject, and I could



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only suppose some unaccountable mental caprice, to be treated empirically by an attitude of knowing indifference, or even, if need were, by the application of what Tennyson calls "empty chaff, well meant for grain." Accordingly after he had made repeated despondent allusions to the "horrible gap" in his reminiscences, at last I said :

"Well, if that's all, I really can't for the life of me see why you should keep on bothering your head about it. Practically the matter's of no more importance than that you should recollect what you had for dinner this day week. Besides—if it's any comfort to you—quite possibly your memory may suddenly return ; that happens not uncommonly in such cases ; and you'll find yourself recalling everything as clearly you can wish—more so maybe ; how bored you were on wet days, and what atrocious stuff your landlady's tea was, and all that——"

When you seek to administer consolation, it is decidedly mortifying if your patient bounces up with a half-suppressed howl, which merges into articulate resentment of your efforts ; and this my friend Elrington speedily did, breaking off my little string of sarcasms.



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"Oh, confound you!" he exclaimed wildly. "That's just it—that's exactly how it is. I *am* beginning to remember it all—and it's enough to drive one mad."

"Well, well, man, don't be in a hurry to set about raving prematurely," I said, considerably taken aback. "Sit down quietly, and tell me anything you have to tell."

He obeyed, regaining with a perceptible effort a composed demeanour, as he began his story, to which I found myself, from force of habit, listening with professional superiority, as if he had been relating symptoms about which it was incumbent upon me to understand much more than he did.

"You know, Stewart," he said, "about a month ago I went for a week to the county Wexford. On the day before I started, I was getting my traps together, and among a lot of things I had had with me on that Kerry expedition last autumn, and had never used since, I found a lightish overcoat, which I wanted. I was just folding it up, when I felt something hard sticking in the lining of the right-hand cuff, and saw that it had been torn in a long slit close to the wrist, and from between the cloth and the lining I poked out—this."



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"This" was a very beautiful sapphire and diamond ring, which he took out of a waistcoat pocket and handed to me.

"They seem to be fine stones," I said, examining them, "clear-set, and well-shaped. I'm no great judge of such things, but I should say that it was worth a lot."

"The point is," Elrington interrupted impatiently, "that I had never seen it before, and couldn't imagine how it had got there. However, I set off next day, and didn't think any more about it for some little time. But in the meanwhile another queer thing happened. I began to remember bits about that infernal little Kerry place, Drumquillan. An odd, eerie sort of experience it was, and is, for it's going on still. Shreds and scraps of things heard and seen keep drifting into one's mind, appearing and vanishing and reappearing, like a range of mountain-peaks in a windy mist. All manner of trifles—snatches of talk about the weather or the crops or the fishing—a black oak cupboard with a stuffed magpie on the top of it—a girl singing somewhere out of sight, and clattering crockery, and an old woman's voice objurgating her in an unknown tongue—these emerge every now and then



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very clearly. But if I try to make anything coherent out of them, it's like mending a torn-up sketch when you've lost all the important pieces. So far, I've recollected only one part of it by any means consecutively, and even that is fragmentary enough. Yet I've very little hope that I can be mistaken."

As he spoke he was hastily turning over a small roll of papers, which he had brought with him, and now he laid one of them on the table before me, saying: "See here—it's all in some way connected with that."

It was a rough water-colour sketch, its main feature being two lakes linked together by a short stream. One was almost encircled by steep, wooded slopes, like the rim of a round, green nest; the other lay, a long oval, running up between low hills, bare and faintly tinted. The sketch had evidently been taken from a height, and was in a very unfinished state.

"Before I began to remember," Elrington said, "that little daub used often to puzzle me. Apparently it is the only piece of work that came back with me from Drumquillan. I was constantly trying to recall something about it, without any success until lately, but now I've succeeded with a vengeance. The



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process has been, as I said, a gradual one, and not easy to describe, so I'll just tell you what at present seem to be established in my mind as clear matters of fact.

"I much admired these twin lakes—that they are at Drumquillan is certain from the date, you see, there in the corner—and wished to sketch them, and through the intervention of my landlady, Mrs. O'Callaghan, I got access to a place in the neighbourhood, which I was certain must command exactly the view I wanted. The name of the place I have forgotten, but I know well the look of the house and grounds. So I went up there one day, in the afternoon it must have been to judge by the light, and found that from the south front of the house, which stands high, I could get a splendid point of view, showing the beautiful rose-leaf curve of the inner lake; this thing's in too great a mess to give any idea of it. A tiled verandah with ivy-grown pillars ran along that side of the house, and a flight of stone steps led down from the terrace into a steep shrubbery with winding walks through it, shut in by thick evergreens; those woolly blobs in the foreground represent their tops. I saw nobody about the place, and made this beginning from



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the top of the steps. Then I went away, fully intending, as I remember, to return next day and finish ; but I have not the faintest recollection of going near the place again until the evening of what I know was my last day at Drumquillan. A singularly fine evening it was, worse luck, with one of the transparent, honey-coloured sunsets that you see in autumn, and a great amber moon getting up over the way, and I took it into my head that I would like to have a look at those lakes by moonlight.

“ My rooms must have been on the ground-floor, for I remember just stepping out of a window, and a short walk through some hilly fields brought me to the place. The lakes really did look fine, all blue steel and frosted silver, in and out of the shadows, which were growing solider as the moon brightened. However, I'd been watching them only a few minutes when I heard steps on the verandah close by, and turning round, there I was face to face with an old lady, evidently the lady of the house. She was a very little old woman, in a black gown and a fluffy white shawl, with a drapery of black lace over her white hair, and she had dark eyes with thick black eyebrows ; altogether distinctly *peintable* ; somehow she



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suggested one of those quaintly marked, ermine-caped moths.

“ But what struck me most in her appearance were her wonderful rings. I had never seen anyone wearing so many ; her fingers literally blazed with them, all diamonds and sapphires—the sparkle in the moonlight caught your eye at once. Of course I apologised for being there, and she said something civil : so far it was as commonplace as possible, and just so far my recollection of the evening is perfectly clear. But then suddenly comes a blur of confusion. I have an impression of struggling violently there in the verandah with somebody—somebody who clutched me by the arm, and whose hand I tried to wrench open ; it unclosed easily, as if its strength was small ; and of a voice shrieking close to my ear. I don’t know how long this wrestling lasted ; it may have been a minute or two before we toppled backwards over the edge of something like a flight of steps, and went rolling down together, until I was stopped with a tremendous thump, and everything ended in a shower of red sparks. . . . Beyond that, except a few hazy glimpses of a railway journey, it is all a blank. How I got back to the farm, or,



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in fact, anything that happened until I came to myself again in the hospital, remains a complete mystery to me. There." Elrington began to roll up his sketch with a show of carefulness, under cover of which he was anxiously watching the effect produced by his story, and waiting for my opinion on it.

Some experience, less extensive, indeed, than I could have wished, of hearing communications from patients had taught me that in this respect it is generally more profitable to receive than to give; and I therefore replied without committing myself to any views: "Your landlady's account was that she had seen you apparently 'enjoying your usual good health and spirits' on the evening you mention, but found you next morning 'so quare and moidhered-like' that she sent her son Hugh up with you to town, to look after you. I know that you did arrive escorted by a big, long-limbed Kerry man, not over fluent with his Sassenach, and very much at sea about finding his way."

"Yes, so I've heard," Elrington said in a tone of unfeigned indifference. These statements were not new to him, and he wanted something more to the purpose.

"Well, now, Elrington," I said after a short



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pause, "let me hear the rest of the story; you've told me nothing that gives you any grounds for worrying yourself to such an extent, as far as I can see."

"Oh, haven't I, and can't you?" he said with sarcastic bitterness. "I only wish that I had the same range of vision."

"What alarming inferences do you draw from the facts, then?" said I.

He replied with startling promptitude: "That I tried to snatch off the old lady's rings, but missed my footing in scuffling, and fell with her down the flight of steps—which was probably the death of her; got an awful bang on the head, but managed to make my way home half-stunned. You know, Stewart, you always declared it looked like a case of concussion."

"And *you* know," I said, "that the others all scouted the idea. In fact, Sir James Blake snubbed me so witheringly, when we called him in, that I've felt quite unqualified ever since."

"Much," said Elrington. "You used to say he should have practised in Noah's ark. I'd rather have your opinion any day."

"Another object-lesson on the folly of



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talking shop before a patient," I said, chagrined, in the circumstances, by his compliment. "You never can tell into what absurdity he won't twist anything he picks up."

"There was precious little twisting required," said Elrington. "It couldn't fit in more easily. Surely, Stewart, you can't honestly maintain that there are no grounds for the conclusion I have come to?"

"I can," I asserted boldly, "and I do, by Jove. If you ask my candid opinion, it simply is that your finding the ring in this curious way, which I don't pretend to explain, together with your continual puzzling of yourself over that sketch, set your imagination to work, until it has woven a sort of permanent nightmare out of the merest trifles, or nothing at all."

"To put it less politely," said Elrington, "you think me as mad as a hatter."

"As for politeness," I said, "really if you consider the charge of robbery with violence which you're bringing against yourself, I hardly think that my theory is more unflattering." Then it occurred to me that this was impaling him in a rather brutal fashion on the other horn of his dilemma, and I added: "You



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can't wonder that almost anything seems more probable than your suddenly turning footpad. You might so easily have tumbled down those steps in the dark without the intervention of that moth-like old lady, who sounds, I must say, almost as mythical as your crude methods of dealing with her property."

"Kleptomania does come on suddenly," said Elrington, who had doubtless been reading up the subject in some popular medical quack-book.

"Kleptomania," I said authoritatively, "if any such malady actually exists, is peculiar to the neurotic and hysterical. I never saw an unlikelier subject than yourself."

I could say so quite truthfully, for in spite of the last weeks' harassment, Elrington's wonted physical robustness remained little impaired, to judge by his aspect, which was somewhat bucolic, suggesting a life of more strenuous activity than a painter's. He had, moreover, to do him justice, a general air of kindly disposed unaggressiveness with which the account of his ruffianly attempt to plunder a frail little old lady was grotesquely incongruous.

"Have you any clear recollection," I re-



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sumed, "of wishing to appropriate the rings? At first sight of them, for instance?"

"Not at all," he said, "any more than I thought of pocketing those two lakes."

"And you never have had a sudden desire to steal at any other time?" I inquired.

"Of course not," he said rather indignantly. "The whole hideous thing's unique in my experience."

"Well then," I said, "if that one confused impression of a scuffle, which was probably just a distorted reminiscence of your sensations when falling, is all you have to go upon, I believe that you needn't give the matter a second thought. It's preposterous. Besides that, suppose an old lady had been robbed, and fatally or seriously injured at Drumquillan, there would no doubt have appeared some report in the Press; such events are not completely ignored, even when they occur in the wilds of Kerry. Now, I remember that you were clamouring for newspapers, and reading them, within a few days after your return, and the chances are that if there had been any account of the affair, you would have seen it, and noticed it, as you were interested, for special reasons, about things connected with



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the neighbourhood. So we may safely take it for granted that nothing of the kind ever got into print, which to my mind is strong presumptive evidence that it never happened at all."

"Just wait a minute; here's another bit of presumptive evidence," Elrington said, with a queer, dismal triumph in his tone. He took from his pocket-book a crumpled, printed scrap, with ragged edges. "Look at this," he said. "I chanced on it the day before yesterday. The newspaper it belongs to came round some books in a parcel from the library, and this bit was torn off. I happened to see it lying about, and the name caught my eye. Then I tried to get the rest of the paper, but naturally they had lit a fire with it by that time."

The scrap was headed "EWS" in the large Gothic characters fashionable for newspaper titles, and in the line below was "ober 7, 1899"; the paragraph to which Elrington pointed remained, however, unmutilated, and ran as follows:—

"MURDEROUS ATTACK UPON AN OLD LADY.

"Our correspondent reports a dastardly outrage from the retired and peaceably conducted



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hamlet of Drumquillan, Co. Kerry. Yesterday morning Miss Dwyer, an aged and much respected member of a family long established in the locality, but now unhappily extinct, was found lying in an unconscious condition outside her residence, having sustained a serious compound fracture of the skull, evidently at the hands of some unscrupulous assassin. As her gold watch and chain are missing, and a number of valuable rings, which the venerable victim was accustomed to wear, had been scattered over the sward convenient, hence it is conjectured that, becoming alarmed, her cowardly assailant fled, abandoning an amount of his booty. Miss Dwyer up to the present continues in an insensible condition, and the fatal nature of her injuries, melancholy to relate, precludes the slightest anticipation of recovery on her part. No clue to the identity of the miscreant in question has as yet been ascertained, but it is considered a specious conjecture that an itinerant tramp may have strayed into the grounds, though the presence of none such has been observed in the vicinity, over which the painful tragedy has cast a profound sensation of gloom. The police maintain a reticent attitude."



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"And mind you, Stewart," said Elrington, as he saw my eyes travelling along the last penny line, "everything that I have told you so far had grown clear in my mind *before* I saw this paragraph, which seems to be a complete corroboration. I spent all yesterday looking up files of last year's newspapers for further accounts, but I found nothing, not even this one. The date, you see, exactly coincides with my return."

It certainly did; and there were other points in my friend's strange story which staggered me not a little. Prominent among these was the fact that I had always considered the symptoms of Elrington's illness to indicate concussion of the brain, resulting from external violence, rather than any spontaneously occurring malady. None of my colleagues, indeed, had shared this view, but it now reciprocally confirmed, and was confirmed by, the emerging reminiscences of our ex-patient. Then the discovery of the ring was, to say the least of it, a remarkable coincidence. Perplexed and uneasy, I sat oracularly dumb.

After a few minutes of this unenlightening silence, Elrington, starting up, began to stalk aimlessly about the room, but soon stopped at



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my end of it, and reopened the conversation :

“Don’t you see, Stewart—good heavens ! you must see what utter ruin this means to me. Even apart from any possible legal consequences, and the horror of having committed the crime, what does it involve ? Why, it proves facts about me which must cut me off henceforward from everything that makes life worth living. Do you think, for instance, that knowing myself to be a lunatic, subject to kleptomaniacal, if not homicidal, impulses, I could dream of marrying Paulina ? I’m at least not criminal enough for that. But what steps to take next I can’t at all decide. Something must be settled without delay.”

“Your best course,” I said, “would be to dismiss the whole matter from your mind ; but if that is impracticable, I don’t see how you could do better than go down to Drumquillan, and make inquiries on the spot. It would be the shortest way of clearing up things—and I’ll come along with you, if you like,” I added, as it flashed across me that he might find a companion serviceable on what must prove a more or less fateful quest.

Elrington accepted my advice and offer with



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a promptitude slightly disconcerting to one who was neither lunatic nor lover. "We'll go *now*," he said briefly, beginning to gather up his papers. "There's just time to catch the last train from Kingsbridge." However, I compounded for the first train next morning ; and by that we went.

Though it started detestably early, the autumn day was drawing near its sunsetting when we arrived at Drumquillan's unpretentious inn, on whose threshold we encountered an eager, ex-waiterlike landlord. With him, after, on my part, hungry ordering of dinner, we fell into the usual topographical conversation, which our special circumstances led us to direct towards a definite point.

"I suppose that at this time of the year you have not many visitors ?"

"Well, no, sir. Indeed, I may say they do be few enough at any season, for all there's not another place in the county Kerry where they'd find the equal of such facilities for fishing—salmon and trouts. But it's comical to see the people that will be lepping off one after the other, like a flock of sheep over a gap, to some place with a reputation tacked on to it for fishing, and very belike half a dozen rods



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to every little atomy of a grilse swimming in it. Now, in them loughs above here, you might be catching them in your hands; and permission got as easy as passing the time of day."

But, having other fish to fry, we did not pursue the subject of these advantages, and I inquired: "Are there many permanent residents?"

"Well, no sir; not to say by any means many, unless you reckon them in the farming class, such as Andy Walsh of Eskalyn, and Mrs. O'Callaghan above at High Banks, who's by way of taking in lodgers. I daresay she does the best she's able for them, poor woman."

At this name Elrington pricked up his ears, and began to listen intently.

"But over and above the plebyans," our host continued, "Drumquillan may be termed a lonesome spot." He gave a short, but presumably exhaustive list of the local patricians, ending with: "And when I've mentioned old Miss Dwyer up yonder, that's about all the gentry we enjoys the society of."

"Dwyer, did you say?" Elrington interrupted—"an old Miss Dwyer?"



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"Yes, sir, living up at the big house, Carrick-an-Aicil, on the top of the rise a bit further up along the Tralee road. Carrick-an-Aicil, I'm told, sir, means 'the Eagles' Rock'; but all such is extinct in this locality."

"That's it—that's what the place was called, I remember now," Elrington muttered at my elbow. "And she's alive, you see—thank Heaven." Then aloud: "And she lives quite alone at Carrick-an-Aicil?"

"Well, since her poor sister's lamented death a twelve month back, sir"—Elrington started violently at that hearing—"she's kep' a sort of lady companion, or some say a cousin of her own. That was a bad business up there, sir, last autumn. You'll maybe remember to have seen news of it on the papers? It happened to be reported particular" (with a self-conscious emphasis) "in the *West Kerry News*."

"No; what was that?" I asked, intervening, because anybody might have remarked how ill my friend dissembled his acute anxiety.

"Why, sir, it was just this month of last year; poor Miss Grace Dwyer, the younger of the two ladies, chanced to be taking a turn on



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the terrace as runs round the house, the way she would mostly be before dinner ; and it seems some villin must have got access surreptitious to the grounds, for she was treacherously attacked, and knocked senseless, and her gold watch and chain took, and the valible rings tore off her fingers, though some of them was got subsequently. Dropped contiguous, so I understand, which is no reason for the talk of exaggeration other people put about, that had very little experience of writing for the Press. But, anyhow, the rogue got away with whatever property he captured, as he easy might, for there was only two or three old servants—females—in the house, and Miss Eleanor being weakly in herself that night, they were all took up with her, and poor Miss Grace was never missed, till coming on towards morning, when they found her lying there in a terrible bad way. It was young Larry Rourke brought the news down here, and my first words were that it would be a disgrace to Drumquillan if the miscreant wasn't apprehended. But the police—— ”

“ Confound them—and did you say the old lady died ? ”

“ Just lingered through the following day,



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sir. The shock was too much for her altogether, what with her advanced age and infirm health. So it's to the gallows by rights that fellow should have gone, if he had his deserts. But a clue we never got. Now I don't blame the police for that, and they without so much as a description from poor Miss Dwyer to identify him by. Let them as has been in the force, say I, and know what they're passing remarks about, throw the first stone at the police—— ”

I heard no more ; for at this point Elrington suddenly darted out into the street, whereupon I followed him, and we both decamped up it with a precipitancy, which, if the incident had occurred at a later stage of our sojourn, might have caused our host to think uneasily about his bill.

Elrington had the advantage of me in training as well as in length of limb, and I found his pace much too severe on the steep gradient up which he sped. When I came up with him he was standing, apparently lost in thought, and looking over a low rustic entrance-gate. He seemed to be unaware of my grampus-like approach, until I tapped him on the shoulder, asking : “ Is this the place ? ” He glanced



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round then, and nodded, while he began to unlatch the gate.

"What on earth are you going to do?" I said. "Isn't it rather an uncivilized hour for calling? On strangers too," I added, feeling that his former visit could hardly be regarded as a regular introduction.

"It's the shortest way of finding out about things," he replied; "shorter than prating, at all events"—whether he referred to the landlord's discourse or mine, or to both, I cannot say—and pushing open the gate, he hurried on up the drive, along which I followed him, with a fervent wish that we were well out of it. Accompanying a self-accused homicide to the scene of his crime was a novel but on the whole disagreeable experience.

Presently we came in sight of the house, which did undoubtedly quite correspond with Elrington's description. There was the verandah with its ivied arches, exactly as he had said, looking down athwart long, darkly-wooded slopes, to the liquid brink of those twin lakes in the valley beneath. They were lit up by far-slanted beams from the sun, setting among golden mists away in a gap of the hills. And there were the stone steps, giving access from



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the terrace to the shrubberies. Nor was the resemblance to end here. For as Elrington stood on the top of that fatal flight, gazing moodily into space, and I watched anxiously for his next move, we were startled by an exclamation.

It proceeded from someone who was just in the act of stepping through a glass door at a few yards' distance ; a very little old lady, dressed in black silk, with a black lace scarf over her snow-white hair ; dark, sharply-drawn eyebrows were a very noticeable feature, and many-coloured light flickered at every motion of her small, delicate hands—Miss Dwyer, beyond a doubt, or else her wraith. She was accompanied by a tall, blonde girl, to whom she turned, saying in a scared undertone : “ Etta, my dear, do you see those people ? ”

An awkward pause ensued, broken by the girl. “ Perhaps,” she said pleasantly, “ these gentlemen have lost their way, or mistaken the place.”

“ No, no, my dear,” the little old lady said, recovering from her surprise, “ I see now that it cannot be a mistake indeed. It is—most assuredly it is—the preserver of my life, whom



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I have always hoped might yet reappear, although I could not persuade anybody to believe in his existence. I know that even you did not, Etta, in your heart, only you were too civil to admit as much. My dear sir," she continued, advancing towards Elrington, who stood still as one amazed, "I am quite overjoyed to meet you again. But oh, how clearly it brings back to me the events of that most alarming night last year : how we encountered one another on this very spot, when you expressed to me your admiration of our fine prospect, whereupon I recommended a survey from the west terrace, and no sooner were you gone out of sight round the corner there than that wretch attacked me from behind, having stolen up unsuspected through the shrubberies, and snatched away my watch, and was tearing off my rings—such intolerable insolence—when, hearing my cries for help, you gallantly sped to my rescue, and forced the miscreant to relinquish his hold. The sound of my poor rings tinkling on the stones as he let them drop was the last thing I remembered ; for as I flew to summon assistance, I slipped, and, falling, struck my head with a violence which rendered me unconscious. Since that time,



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how frequently have I spoken to incredulous hearers of my fear lest you should have sustained some grave injuries in my defence, my niece, I am sure can testify."

"Yes, indeed, Aunt Grace," said her companion, "you have so often told me about it, and dictated the account of it in your letters, that I almost feel as if I had been here on the spot myself."

"My impression is, my dear sir," continued Miss Dwyer, "that you and my assailant were struggling in perilous proximity to this flight of steps, a circumstance which might well have led to serious results. It was, no doubt, somewhat strange that you should have afterwards so completely vanished from the scene; but it seemed to me not improbable that, failing to secure the miscreant at once, you had gone in pursuit of him to a distance from which you could not conveniently return, and not being a resident in our neighbourhood, had no occasion to do so. But whether or no that explanation were correct, my friends certainly need not have been so positive that you were merely a figment of my disordered brain as actually to bid me to keep silence on the subject before acquaintances: gross ingratitude



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on my part, since save for your chivalrous intervention the villain would doubtless have accomplished his fell purpose, and taken my life. As it is, beyond the loss of my watch, and one of my finest sapphires, I should have had little personally to deplore, with regard to the adventure, were it not that my poor sister, who was in a weak state of health at the time, suddenly succumbed to the shock of learning from an indiscreet attendant what risks I had undergone."

During the little old lady's speech, which showed, it struck me, the marks of frequent repetition, Elrington's countenance afforded an interesting study in progressive phases of joyful relief from tormenting fear. And simultaneously with this rout of his dire self-suspensions he regained the presence of mind which was by no means lacking to him in ordinary circumstances. His impromptu replica of her formal, old-fashioned courtesies was very creditable, as :

"You mentioned, madam, that you had lost one of your rings," he said, producing his find. "Permit me the pleasure of restoring it to you, with many apologies for having inadvertently retained your property for such a



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length of time. The fact is that I found it only the other day, quite accidentally, sticking in my coat-sleeve, where it must have caught when I grappled with your assailant. It seems that, as you conjecture, I fell with him down these steps, and was half-stunned by a blow on the head, which ultimately brought on a rather serious illness, and, what is much more to be regretted, prevented me from rendering you any further assistance at the time, and enabled that scoundrel to make good his escape. I trust that you will now excuse my inefficiency, though I assure you that I do not find it easy to pardon myself for so inopportune a piece of clumsiness."

Therewith he would have slipped the ring on the finger of its owner, but this she forbade. "No, my dear sir," she said, "it has now too many unhappy associations for me; it would constantly remind me of a melancholy incident. Keep it, I beg, as a memento of your own chivalrous action, until you meet with some young and lovely lady, who will consent to wear it for your sake."

In this arrangement my friend was obliged to acquiesce, doing so all the more readily, if I am not mistaken, from considerations con-



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nected with the existence of a certain lady, lovely and young. And the prosperity which thenceforward attended him alike in his love-affair, and in his career as an artist, may be inferred from the fact that a few days ago I saw the blue-starred ring sparkling on the hand of Paulina Elrington, wife of the distinguished R.A.



“ But if Jove equals or successors had,  
Even Jove of safe revenges might be glad.”







## *Among the Honey-Blobs*

**I**T was at the garden-door that the three young Hennessys got in, finding that hitherto impervious barrier against their curiosity set helplessly ajar, as they came along the lane on their way home from school. The door ought not on any account to have been left open, and the boys ought not by any means to have gone through it, so that their entrance had involved the perpetration of a double misdemeanour. Still, as the omission to turn a key may be a venial offence, and the temptation to take a look at the place that you have passed every day for a couple of long years without the chance of a glimpse is likely to have an irresistible strength, the total sum of wrongdoing was not necessarily a serious amount, provided that it went no further. But then it did go further without delay.

For almost the first object that Jimmy, Dan, and Johnny noticed when they had trespassed over the threshold was, just across the gravel walk, a row of goodly gooseberry bushes, with



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spreading boughs bent earthward under a heavy burden of ripe fruit. And the next fact to strike them was that the big, walled garden, basking in the afternoon sun, apparently contained no living creatures except themselves. Never in the whole course of their experience had they met with such an opportunity. Even Jimmy, the eldest brother, probably had not in all his dozen years eaten a dozen gooseberries; and if he had, they were doubtless scarcely softer than so many marbles; for the very amenities of life come harshly and crudely to a workhouse child. But here—*Musha, Johnny, look at these ones; they're as big as your head.—Bedad and themselves is great entirely.—Whist now, and don't let us be wasting our time gabbing.* It was in truth a splendid spectacle. Beryl, amber, and garnet hung the berries, warmed through and through by the rays in which they gleamed half translucent. Who could say which were the more delectable? The small, hairy-skinned green ones, sweeter than honey, or those others, huge, yellow, and egg-shaped, each of them nearly a handful, and a mouthful quite? These three little Irish gossoons would assuredly have found themselves in complete sympathy with



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## AMONG THE HONEY-BLOBS

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that hapless English Duke, who halted his melancholy procession, bound for Tower Hill, that he might purchase himself a farewell taste of his favourite honey-blobs.

Moreover, to whet the edge of the unlawful gatherers' rapture, there was a feeling that their revel might be as brief as rare, and also just a sub-acid flavour of peril, faint, it is true, because that door, open close behind them, promised safety at any moment, if the worst came to the worst, and some alarming figure appeared upon the scene. Yet in the upshot the very sense of security which this exit created proved their undoing. For, still believing themselves to be near enough, they unconsciously strayed on and farther on, absorbing and absorbed, from bush to laden bush, until at last, when many yards intervened between them and their refuge, they were suddenly interrupted by a sound more dreadful to them than the crack of doom. It was the grating cranch of a key turned in coarse rusty wards.

Three heads were reverted, panic-stricken, to behold nothing less terrible than the lanky form of Francey Creagh, who was in the act of locking the door—on them. Now, with Francey



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Creagh, until a few months back, their relations had been familiar and unfriendly. In those days it had commonly been his lot to help his mother with the transport of her week's wash, often encountering on the way the brothers Hennessy. And they had been wont thereupon to scoff, embittering his already distasteful task by feigned curiosity about the contents of the white-covered basket, with other such pungent sarcasms. On these occasions, Francey had not found himself in a position effectively to resent their jibes, even if he had not been by nature the reverse of pugnacious; and this made him brood over insults, which he might otherwise have summarily suppressed, or, more magnanimously, have disregarded as emanating merely from boarded-out workhouse children, his juniors by several years. His only resource, therefore, had been to call them "Union beggar brats," a taunt to which they had become fairly case-hardened. Since then, however, the posture of affairs had been greatly changed by Francey's having attained to the position of "garden-boy up at old Mr. Black's." That was, of course, highly important promotion, and at the present crisis it



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had put within his reach one of those safe revenges, which, according to the ancient playwright, Jove himself might not in certain circumstances disdain. By no more relentless enemy could the young Hennessys have been caught devouring "ould Mr. Black's" gooseberries.

"Oh, just you wait there, me tight lads," Francey said, drawing out the key. "Just stop aisy and content where ye are, till I send along Mr. Doyle and Pincher to regulate yous." Mr. Doyle was the head-gardener, and Pincher a large brindled terrier of ferocious reputation. "When I have them fetched, I'll be stepping off meself for the pólis," Francey added. "Don't stir now: robbing away ye may be, and aiting all before yous."

A sweet moment it was to him, as he trotted nimbly up the long straight middle walk, followed by a rising howl from Johnny, and no less futile clods, hurled after him with wrathful yells by Johnny's elder brethren. Full well Francey knew that they must needs obey his mocking injunction, so inaccessibly high were the walls of this kitchen-garden, whence the only outlet left unbarred led right into a fearsome stronghold, Mr. Doyle's dog-watched



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yard. The boys themselves, too, were dismally aware that they had been trapped, and at first they abandoned all hope, standing for a while rooted in consternation. Then they began to rush about, aimlessly enough, with some desperate notion of finding a place to hide in, and as luck would have it, they lit upon a small ladder, set in a corner against the wall, near a wheelbarrow full of limp weeds. The wall-top, with its fringe of snapdragons, and canterbury-bells, and seedling sycamores, rose bafflingly above the short ladder; but to Jimmy occurred the idea that they might lengthen it sufficiently by using the wheelbarrow as a platform, which, with strenuous hauling and hoisting, they contrived to do. Propped thus, the ladder did reach to a practicable height, and Jimmy forthwith ran up it, to survey the drop on the other side. This, although certainly somewhat formidable, was less so than he had expected, because at that place a weedy grass-bank had buttressed itself against the brick wall. Jimmy looked round in a hurry to communicate the good news, and thereby lost his balance, so that he barely saved himself from falling "after his head" by an abrupt spring down into the lane.



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As it was, he stumbled, and came down awkwardly on hands and knees, severely spraining his wrist. With an excruciated shriek he announced that he was after wrenching the arm off of himself, and in the same breath exhorted Dan to be minding Johnny, and lending him a hand up on to the ladder.

At this very moment, however, a deep bark which sounded from an alarmingly little distance bereft Dan of every feeling except such a vehement desire to be out of the garden, that, thrusting himself before Johnny, regardless of the consideration honourably due from ten years old towards seven, he scampered up the step-ladder, and flopped down into the way-side nettles with remarkable agility. "Johnny's coming just behind me—he's all right," he shouted to Jimmy. "Run for your life, or they'll be setting the dog on us." Distracted by the pains shooting up his disabled arm, and half-blinded by the dust which a thickly powdered sow-thistle had flirted into his eyes, Jimmy rushed off in wild flight. Racing across the footbridge that here spanned Two-Mile River, the lane's turbulent neighbour, he darted into the hazel-wood beyond it, with Dan panting at his heels, and neither of them



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halted, till they were safely entangled in among the devious paths.

Meanwhile forsaken Johnny was very far indeed from being all, or even at all, right. In scaling the wall, Dan had kicked over the unsteadily poised ladder, which came near ending on the spot all his unlucky small brother's troubles, but which did merely fall upon and crack a handle of the wheelbarrow. Thus deserted and immured, Johnny gave himself up for lost. Momentarily he expected the arrival of Mr. Doyle and the dreadful dog, terrors which almost eclipsed that threat of the awful "pólis" looming luridly in the background. With nothing prompting him more rational than the natural instinct of a hunted creature to change its place, he once more began to run about, until at last, certain that he heard footsteps, he bolted into a dark tool-shed, where he hid himself in a corner underneath a pile of empty sacks.

Presently Peter Doyle and Francey Creagh made their actual appearance. They were not accompanied by Pincher, whose letting loose his master had forbidden, rather to Francey's disappointment. He was further chagrined by the conspicuous absence of the marauders,



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whom he had denounced, and was not a little dismayed when the ladder, and wheelbarrow, and trampled mould in the angle of the wall showed clearly how they had escaped. Disconcerting indeed for him was the whole outcome of the affair, seeing that not only had he been baulked of the vengeance apparently within his grasp, but he had also incurred wrath from his superior by "the fool's trick of leaving the ladder where the young miscreants could get at it." Mr. Doyle discreetly ignored the fact that it was he himself who by leaving the door open had originally let them in; and, grumbling about the folly of stupid bosthoons, he stalked off to continue the thinning of his grapes, while Francey, much crest-fallen, resumed his work among the turnip-drills.

From thenceforward immense periods of time began to roll tardily over the captive cowering under those heaped-up sacks. First the vast interval which elapsed before that critical moment about six o'clock in the evening, when Francey entered the shed with a sheaf of long-handled tools, causing Johnny wellnigh to suffocate himself in his attempts to maintain a breathless immobility. Then



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followed the interminable dark hours, after shed and all had been locked up for the night, when nothing remained at large except Pincher, whose sniffings about the door, and barks at passers-by on the road, sometimes enhanced Johnny's terrors, but sometimes served to lighten a little the pressure of his appalling solitude. Happily he slept part of it away; still, his more than round-the-clock imprisonment had grown enormously long to him by the time that anybody stirred again. Nevertheless, when at last steps sounded outside, his alarms at once flowed back into their former channel. By and by, Francey Creagh opened the shed door, to its prisoner's fearful joy, and next whistled to Pincher, who was evidently led off to breakfast and kennel in the yard. Thereupon Johnny ventured to creep out, fondly hoping that the road-door also might have been unlocked; but alas! not a bit of it. Impelled by sheer hunger, he seized the opportunity to eat a few berries from the nearest of the bushes, and whilst thus engaged, strikingly illustrated the ironical manner in which circumstances alter cases. For he presented the strange, the portentous spectacle of a small schoolboy left to his own devices in a pleasant



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garden, amid the sparkling sunshine of a dewy summer morning, surrounded by ripe gooseberries in a profusion beyond the dreams of gluttony — and, notwithstanding, altogether miserable.

Very soon some trivial sound scared him back again to his refuge among the potato-sacks, where he lay hidden through the whole long days, sallying forth only in the same hurried fashion at the breakfast and dinner hours. On one of these excursions he was all but surprised and caught by the return of Francey Creagh, an incident which increased his rabbit-like timidity : the slightest noise or stir would send him scurrying to seek cover, in an absolute frenzy of panic. His fading hopes, meanwhile, were solely fixed upon some opportune unlocking of the door into the lane, but it remained inexorably fast, or the arrival of his brothers to rescue him somehow, but that never happened. Despair and starvation sapped the strength of his mind and body as steadily as the early-rising sun marched up and down the sky. He had come to feel as if he had been leading this bad-dreamlike sort of existence "for ever and ever and ever and all the evers that ever were," and it was in reality the third



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evening of his incarceration, when he took a desperately daring step.

Francey Creagh had come, much later than usual, to lock up the tool-shed, a duty which he had in fact forgotten to perform at the proper time. He was in a hurry, to judge by his way of banging the door and wrenching out the key. Suddenly the thought occurred to Johnny how it might be possible to bribe this inveterate enemy into setting him free so that he could run straight home with himself out of his horrible captivity into the long-lost Paradise of the little house by the old water-mill, and the company of Mrs. Doran, and Jimmy and Dan. Fortunately Johnny had in his pocket all his worldly goods in the shape of what he called his teetum-totum, a white bone object, which a dexterous twirl betwixt thumb and forefinger would set spinning in a delightful way, till, falling, it turned up one of ten numbers with thrilling uncertainty. Overjoyed would he be to regain his liberty, even at the price of this unique possession; the sacrifice seemed to him of no account, and he was all eagerness to seize the present opportunity. Accordingly as he heard quick steps clumping past, he drummed



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loudly on the long, narrow pane, which made darkness visible in the shed, and pressing his face against the dusty glass, called at the shrill top of his voice to Francey Creagh. Undoubtedly Francey both heard and saw, for he stopped in his run to look back through the fading twilight; but then, after peering for a moment, he rushed on faster than before, in fact positively galloping. That haste, Johnny made sure, was to summon Mr. Doyle, and the "pólis," and every other appalling kind of retribution; and much terror at his own act immediately fell upon him. Long did he lie quaking in anticipation of its consequences, but the night-hours lagged uneventfully by. Not a soul came next or nigh the shed. Only Pincher, as was his wont, harmlessly prowled about the garden, until glimmers of dawn roused the twittering birds to breakfast with contented indiscrimination on grubs and green peas and slugs and scarlet strawberries, while wasps, fastidiously voracious, began to buzz about the ripest fruit. Nothing good or bad had come, apparently, of that rash attempt to obtain release.

Now, all this while, in the world outside the garden, Johnny's two brothers were experi-



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encing troublous times. They had, of course, missed him as soon as the urgent flurry of their flight subsided, and then, in reply to Jimmy's reproaches, Dan declared positively that Johnny had followed him over the garden-wall. The fact was that fright had prevented him from keeping any clear remembrance of what had actually taken place; he retained merely a vague impression of having heard Johnny's footsteps pattering after him. This nebulous impression, however, convenience requiring, quickly condensed itself in his mind into the more solid form of definite knowledge, and with each repetition of the statement: "Sure I seen him lepping down just behind me," he more nearly convinced himself of its truth. But, in that case, what had become of Johnny at all was the next question, and the first answer to suggest itself ran grimly: "He might be after slipping into the river." Such an accident was indeed only too possible and probable on the narrow footbridge with its broken hand-rail, crossing a stream not very wide, but swift and deep; many were the stories of woeful disaster warningly related by anxious parents and guardians, who dwelt in the neighbourhood of its dangerous banks. So with a



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double dread upon them the boys warily retraced their steps back to the bridge. That not a sign of Johnny could they behold anywhere was quite in accordance with their fears, for the strong current would speedily sweep him away into the big Firowen River a little lower down, and it would carry him straight out to sea. "Like enough he'll never be got again, the same as Joe McDonnell, that was drowned mackerl fishing off Inish Corr," Jimmy said, and began to cry bitterly, while Dan, with his undisclosable reasons for surmising that Johnny might still, though in extremely distressful circumstances, inhabit the land of the living, stood and stared dumbly at the hurrying water.

Hence the two boys fared home at last bringing their doleful tidings, which spread rapidly among the neighbours. When the report reached Peter Doyle's domain, it found confirmation in so far that the three young Hennessys were known to have been in the garden, and appeared to have fled towards the river. Certainly they had all got away. Thus Dan had to abandon his secret belief in the possibility of Johnny's capture and detention. Both the surviving trespassers were to some



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extent relieved by the discovery that their delinquency was overlooked amid the sensation caused by its tragical sequel.

The melancholy fate of Johnny was deeply deplored by the decent widow woman, Mrs. Doran, with whom the boys had for several years past been boarded out from Rathkelly Union Workhouse, and who took a kindly interest in their welfare, making a conscientiously small profit from the few shillings a week received for their support. She now unavailingly lamented over this sorrowful end of "the crathur that was growing a fine little gossoon, God be good to it, and very cute entirely"; while she more effectually steeped Jimmy's swollen wrist with marsh mallows, and tore up a tolerably whole apron into bandages. Then she bethought her of sending word to the boys' nearest relation, Mick Dermody, who was their dead mother's brother, and employed as a labourer on a farm at no great distance from Rathkelly. So she bought a sheet of paper and an envelope for a penny, which may not have been much more than three hundred per cent above their normal market price, and wrote her bad news laboriously with a rusty pen dipped in a curious



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fluid composed partly of peat-soot and cold black tea.

Early on the forenoon of the day after Johnny's failure to enter into negotiations with Francey Creagh, that despicable enemy, Mick Dermody arrived at Mrs. Doran's cabin, a red-bearded, melancholy-minded, good-natured man, wearing his Sunday clothes in honour of the calamity. After he had listened to many detailed accounts of the affair, as well as sundry diverse opinions respecting the time and place at which "the corp" was most likely to be washed up, if washed up at all, little seemed left for him to do, and the unoccupied hours of his holiday beginning to drag rather heavily, he determined that, "just for the satisfaction of his own mind," he would step up to the garden, when once he had inspected the fatal footbridge, and have a talk with the youngster who had last seen the three brothers together. But on arriving there Mick found nobody to interview except the head-gardener himself. Mr. Doyle was decidedly out of humour, because Francey Creagh, after absenting himself from his duties that morning, had now despatched a sister to announce his intention of staying away for good, on the transparent pretext that "he felt quare and wake."



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“How wake he is!” Mr. Doyle said ironically. “It wouldn’t be very long before I’d strengthen him with a stout ash-plant, if I had the managing of him. Not that the lazy young clown’s any great loss at all, and wouldn’t have been uncommonly apt to get the sack before he was much older, whether or no. But you can’t pick up any sort of a boy at a minyit’s notice, as the young miscreant right well knew, running off from his work that way, without with your leave or by your leave. Bedad, he needn’t trouble himself to be coming here looking for a character: he’d get one he mightn’t like.”

Having grumbled thus, Mr. Doyle was at leisure to discuss his visitor’s business, but could throw no new light on the matter. There did not seem to be any doubt that Francey Creagh had seen the three boys in the garden, that he had locked them into it, and that they had all escaped over the wall. It was a bad job, the unlucky little chap running into the river. Them brothers of his had a right to have minded him better, instead of bringing him thieving into places where they had no call to be. Then Mr. Doyle offered to let Mick Dermody out, by the shortest way, through the



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kitchen-garden, which they accordingly entered. And they had scarcely done so when they became aware of a wild and piteous wailing.

Johnny Hennessy had just made one of his hasty sallies forth to see whether by any odd chance the road-door was open at last; and returning shedwards heart-sick with hope deferred, had half-blindly as he passed a bush, grabbed a gooseberry, to the disturbance of a clinging wasp, which having already been at the trouble of gnawing a round hole in the skin, became justly incensed, and furiously stung the intrusive finger. The sudden burning stab, and succeeding numb ache, finally shattered Johnny's sorely tried self-control, so that, disregarding the dangerous consequences of making any noise, he had sat down on a garden-roller, and broken into shrill lamentations.

"Be the powers!" said his uncle, "'tis the spalpeen itself." And "Where now, in the name of goodness, was it all this while?" said Peter Doyle. But not for some little time could they elicit any intelligible explanation from the utterances of the terrified and famished child.

After the occurrence of this culminating



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point in his afflictions, however, Johnny's plight rapidly mended. Wide experience of such mishaps enabled Mr. Doyle promptly to assuage the wasp-sting by the soothing application of a raw onion, and his stout, kindly wife presently produced for the relief of other distressing symptoms a most comforting bowl of warm bread and milk, well sweetened with strong brown sugar. By the time that his uncle restored him to his domestic circle, incredulously delighted all round, he felt as if the events of the last few days were swimming off into the mists of a dimly remembered though very evil dream.

Nevertheless this affair of the young Hennesys' trespass had some lasting effects on the future of all the persons chiefly concerned therein. Francey Creagh, the rancorous resentor and avenger of insults, came out of it ill enough, having accomplished nothing more satisfactory than the loss of his good situation, to the indignant regret of his mother. For even if there were any chance of Mr. Doyle's consenting to take him on again, Francey could not and would not face the ridicule certain to await him, supposing that anybody up there had, putting two and two together, discovered



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how he had in reality run away from what he believed to be little Johnny Hennessy's ghost. Johnny himself, the least blameworthy of the party, lost nothing of more account than his taste for gooseberries, which he thenceforth regarded with abhorrence, because of their association with his miseries among the earthy odoured sacks. His brother Jimmy did not get off so easily, as he was never completely "the better of" his sprain, a weakness in that wrist continuing to "come agin" him more or less for the rest of his life. As for Dan, who had behaved more reprehensibly than either of his brethren, the fact that nothing in particular seemed to have befallen him might be less unedifying if we could imagine an appropriate penalty in his consciousness of having failed his companions at a pinch, and incurred their mistrust in all future emergencies. But at the risk of appearing to disparage even-handed justice, we must report Dan to have somehow convinced himself that by leaving Johnny a prisoner in the garden he had saved him from finding a watery grave in the river, a belief under which he viewed his own part in the adventure, with considerable complacency, as a feather in his cap.







“As a nail sticketh fast between the joinings of stones, so  
sin sticketh close between buying and selling.”







## *A Stroke of Business*

IT was a brooch of very imposing size, yet its mere dimensions were certainly the least of its remarkable charms. A mazy circle of twisted golden wire, quite two inches in diameter, formed its framework, encompassing a spray of five large shamrocks, composed of clear-set crystals, alternately pale lilac and pale green in hue; and three similar shamrocks drooped on glittering stalks as pendants from the rim. These crystals were described in the invoice as amethysts and aquamarines, and the retail price of the ornament was three-and-sixpence. So goldenly gleamed its gold, and so sparkling were its delicately tinted jewels, that it might well be considered to look fully worth the money. Part of the stock-in-trade it was of Thomas Colgan, who kept the chief shop in Dundoyle, and Minnie Colgan, his eldest daughter, thought it by far the most beautiful piece of jewellery that she had ever beheld.

Minnie was not, it is true, a very critical judge, her opportunities of seeing such things



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having hitherto been but few, as she had only just returned from a long residence with her grandparents away in a remote corner of a far western county, wild enough to make the town of Dundoyle appear by contrast a place of vast magnitude, liveliness and wealth, abounding in wonderful spectacles. Noteworthy among these was the unpacking of a consignment of fancy goods, ordered by her father for the approaching Christmas season. She deemed it scarcely possible that a more magnificent display could anywhere else be seen, and from the first moment when her eyes grew large with gazing at the bewildering miscellany, this splendid green and lilac brooch became the object of their utmost admiration.

Her father, on the contrary, was not by any means satisfied with its aspect, or best pleased at its acquisition, and he grumbled a little at the sight of it. Hill and Filson, he said, had a right to have known better than to be sending him jewellery of that expensive class to a poor, small, backward place like Dundoyle, where who, he'd like to know, was apt to give much over a shilling or so for a thing of the sort.

"There's no very great price on it, after all," remarked his wife, who also thought it



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## *A STROKE OF BUSINESS*

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beautiful exceedingly. "Three-and-six is little enough, I should say, to ask for the likes of it."

"'Tis a deal more than you'll find many people ready these times to pay for a bit of a shiny pin," her husband replied discontentedly. Trade was bad, and his little business struggling rather less successfully even than usual. He could ill afford to venture on speculative investments, of the nature of which he felt the amethyst-aquamarine trinket to be.

However, it was duly placed in a glass-sided box on the linen-drapery counter. This box had been constructed by Jimmy Black, a local carpenter, and was not particularly well adapted for the effective exhibition of wares. Peering through the thick panes, Minnie found it really difficult to catch a glimpse of the lovely glitter. Moreover, the linen-drapery department was situated at the back of the shop, and so badly lit, even in bright weather, that customers had to make their purchases more or less at random, which sometimes resulted in disappointing surprises on subsequent examination. In fact it might easily happen that the brooch would be overlooked by people who did not know what a treasure the case contained: so Minnie reflected hopefully. For Minnie's



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wishes about the matter were entirely different from those of her parents. Her view was that if the brooch remained unsold, she might have a chance of wheedling her father into bestowing it upon her as a Christmas present. Such a grand piece of good luck indeed could hardly seem otherwise than improbable at the outset ; still, it was just within the bounds of possibility, and as the days slipped by, its unlikelihood gradually decreased.

Though the Colgans lived next door to their shop, Minnie seldom visited it, because the establishment included a drinking-bar, and Thomas Colgan did not choose his daughter to be seen about licensed premises. With Christmas week, however, came an emergency that obliged him to depart from his rule. Severe colds incapacitating his wife and two of his assistants, left him so short-handed, just in the middle of the season's extra-busy time, that he had no resource save to let Minnie preside at the linen-drapery counter. In a flutter of self-importance and self-distrust she took up her new post. Its responsibilities made her feel both proud and anxious, while she was keenly conscious that if she could discharge her duties satisfactorily, she would improve her prospects



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## *A STROKE OF BUSINESS*

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of successfully coaxing her father for the possession of the peerless brooch. Always provided, of course, that cruel circumstances did not call upon her to take part in the doleful transaction of selling it irretrievably, and thus by her own deed shatter all her hopes.

For the first few days everything went on prosperously. Minnie effected a fair number of sales without getting into any inextricable muddles, and her father's praise of her capacity as a counter-hand caused her no small elation. More gratifying still, nobody had so much even as "priced" the green and lilac brooch. Her conscience, partly, and partly fear of her father's observation, would not allow her to put it out of danger's reach by hiding it quite away; but she did artfully throw a crochet scarf over its corner of the glass-box, and thereby made its perilous sparkling far less conspicuous. She began to feel tolerably confident that it would be left happily on hand.

Nevertheless, despite her precaution, her hopes were at last overclouded by the arrival of an alarming crisis. It was early in the afternoon of Christmas Eve, when business had become slack, as most people were at their dinner, that a customer walked into the shop, and made



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for the linen-drapery counter. A stout, good-humoured-looking, middle-aged woman, in a comfortable warm plaid shawl, and matronly black velvet bonnet, there was nothing ominous about the appearance of this stranger, at whose advent Minnie unforebodingly rejoiced, expecting a harmless and profitless demand for red flannel, or grey knitting yarn. But herein she deceived herself sadly.

The beginning indeed was all very well. The new-comer bought, quite to her own and Minnie's satisfaction, a large fantastic hat, trimmed with a garland of huge purple rose-buds, a remainder, incredibly reduced, from the last midsummer madness of provincial millinery. So far so good ; but then : " Nicely 'twill suit my little girl," she said, when the bargain was concluded. " And now, my dear, be so good as to show me what brooches you have shut up there in the glass contrivance."

At this request a shiver of apprehension ran coldly through Minnie, who was just drawing up the bill for one Paris Model Hat, bought by Mrs. Toole of Barnamweel. However, she of course could not but comply, and the case was promptly opened. Nor was Minnie permitted long to cherish the hope that the hand-



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somest of the brooches might yet once again fail to attract a customer's attention. Mrs. Toole rapidly scanned the contents of the tray, and almost immediately stretched a hand towards the too-bright flash of the crystals, exclaiming : " That's it. This one here sitting in the corner ; the very same it is, according to what he said, with the gold curly-ques twisted in and out all through the coloured stones ; like them round little webs you see in the sun on the furze-bushes of a morning, he said it was, and it is so, bedad. I suppose, now, you haven't had e'er another of something the same pattron ? "

" We have not, ma'am," Minnie replied with a sinking heart, " ne'er another one had we like it at all only itself. But we could procure it."

" Ah sure, not at all, my dear," said Mrs. Toole, " I only asked to make certain this is the one he seen, and it's apt to be, if you hadn't the like of it. I'm glad you hadn't it sold. He was afraid it might be by now, but I couldn't get to come over here till to-day. 'Tis a long step from our place, and we do our shopping mostly at Corr's in Ballyglesh. Uncommon tasty it looks, when the light shines again it," she said, as she contemplated the brooch with



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her head poised admiringly awry. "Real pleased he'll be to see it coming home. And how much might you be charging for it, my dear? I should suppose somewheres about three shillings, or may be four."

A brief but violent conflict rose and raged, and subsided in Minnie's mind before she answered this question. She found herself suddenly confronted with a temptation overpoweringly strong. To even an inexperienced saleswoman's ear the customer's suggested "four shillings" plainly indicated a limit beyond which she would go little, if at all. And thereupon it occurred to Minnie how easily she could prevent the dreaded sale just by adding a few pence to the price, which, luckily was not marked in plain figures on the object of her desires. To the dishonesty of this simple plan she was, it is true, fully alive; but that seemed for the moment a trivial drawback compared with the affliction of irrevocably renouncing all her hopes, when they had apparently arrived so near the verge of coming to pass. Accordingly, after a hardly perceptible hesitation, she replied, with a bold resolve to do the thing thoroughly while she was about it: "Seven-and-sixpence, ma'am."



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## *A STROKE OF BUSINESS*

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"The Laws bless us!" Mrs. Toole ejaculated, laying down the brooch with a start, as if it had turned red-hot in her hand. "What was that you said, my dear? Sure who in the world 'ud think of giving seven-and-six—or the half of it—for the likes of such a little gew-gaw? Them sort of shiny fandangles do be falling in pieces on you before you know where you are, and the polish wears off of them while you would be looking at it. 'Deed then, it's long enough you're apt to be asking that price. But maybe now you mistook the figures."

"Seven-and-sixpence it is," Minnie averred, feigning to re-examine the mysterious marks on the small label with an expert's air: "Them big, greenish stones is very scarce entirely, and the gold in it is first-rate quality, so that makes it come terrible dear. There's prettier ones a deal cheaper."

"Well now, I'm sorry," said Mrs. Toole, "for the lad had set his heart on that one in particular, and he'll be disappointed over it. You see, it's not for myself; 'twas a nephew by marriage of my sister's asked me to see after it. He seemed to be delicate about coming in to buy it himself, for some reason or other; I don't rightly know what. But between you



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and me, I'm thinking, my dear, there's apt to be a young lady at the bottom of it, he was that exact with his descriptions. Not that he let on a word; all he said was he was after seeing it here one day, and taking a fancy to it. And three or four shillings is a sight of money for him to be paying over a present. If the price was four-and-six, or five shillings itself, I might contrive to manage it for him, but three half-crowns is beyond the beyonds altogether. I must look through your other ones. He bid me do the best I could, if it wasn't to be had."

Mrs. Toole, it appeared, thought that the best she could do was to select a square-shaped, solid-looking brooch, of a dull and dubious metal, set with two or three small, lack-lustre red stones. Minnie would not have approved of the choice, if she herself were to have been presented with the ornament, as she considered it "an ugly lump of a thing," and knew that it had a weak, soft pin, certain to bend crooked, or snap off, in next to no time. Its price, however, was only two-and-ninepence, and that recommended it to Mrs. Toole, who departed half satisfied with her purchase.

Notwithstanding some pricks of conscience,



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Minnie felt much more than half satisfied with the result of her stratagem, as she replaced the rescued brooch in its corner. The fact that she had been the means of providing someone else's sweetheart with a very inferior sort of Christmas box did not cause her the slightest compunction. On the contrary rather, she regarded this unknown person as in a way a competitor with her for the ownership of the amethysts and aquamarines, so that her sentiments towards her rival might have been condensed into a disparaging: "Cock her up, bedad!" Having thus successfully averted a disaster which had imminently threatened, she began to flatter herself with the conjecture that all the serious dangers had been surmounted. Her hopes continued to rise as the bustling hours of Christmas Eve passed by without a threat, until at the late-closing-time, when her father bade her run home, and be getting the supper, while he saw to the shutting up, her sense of security seemed entirely justified. Thomas Colgan had done a fine day's business, and was in high good-humour. Minnie thought her prospects looked extremely bright, and she resolved that she would set about coaxing the brooch out of her father on the very first



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favourable opportunity. In sanguine moments she believed that it would really be a case of ask and have ; the prize was to all intents and purposes won.

But at their late and scrambling breakfast next morning, when she was just on the point of introducing the fateful subject, her father casually remarked :

“ Oh, by the way, I got rid of the big sham-rock brooch last night, after you'd gone home. Young Dan Daly bounced in, in a great flurry ; said he was after disremembering *somebody's* Christmas-box, and there'd be blue murder over it. And as he fancied the green stones in it, I let him have it for a couple of shillings, and glad to get it off our hands. So, if I'm not mistook, you're apt presently to see Annie Morrissy wearing it. Leastways, I wouldn't be in his coat if she knew he'd took and gave it to anyone else.”

Here was a hope-shattering blow, dealt with treacherous unexpectedness. Minnie listened with her face bent over her cup, the contents of which she was stirring into a rapid whirlpool. Even in the first bitterness of her disappointment she could not refrain from wondering with awe what her father would say if



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it came to his knowledge that she had practically refused an offer of five shillings for the brooch which he had so recklessly sacrificed. Such was the intensity of her conscience-stricken chagrin that she could hardly have concealed her discomposure had not the post, just then arriving, created a diversion. It brought her nothing except a small parcel, which she looked at with indifference, because she recognised the handwriting as that of Christy Heron, a distant cousin, whom she had liked and looked down upon all the days of her life, and she thought he was sure to have sent her something stupid. Carelessly she opened the parcel, which contained a little card-box. And in the box what should there be but the very same ugly, square-shaped brooch that she had sold yesterday to Mrs. Toole? Wrapped round it was a letter. Christy wrote apologetically about the brooch, which he feared was a poor, common-looking sort of thing altogether. He had hoped he would be sending her something more to her taste, like the one he had heard her say she had a fancy for; but it was the best he could get by Mrs. Toole.

As she spelled out the crooked, blotted lines, Minnie began to see clearly what she had done.



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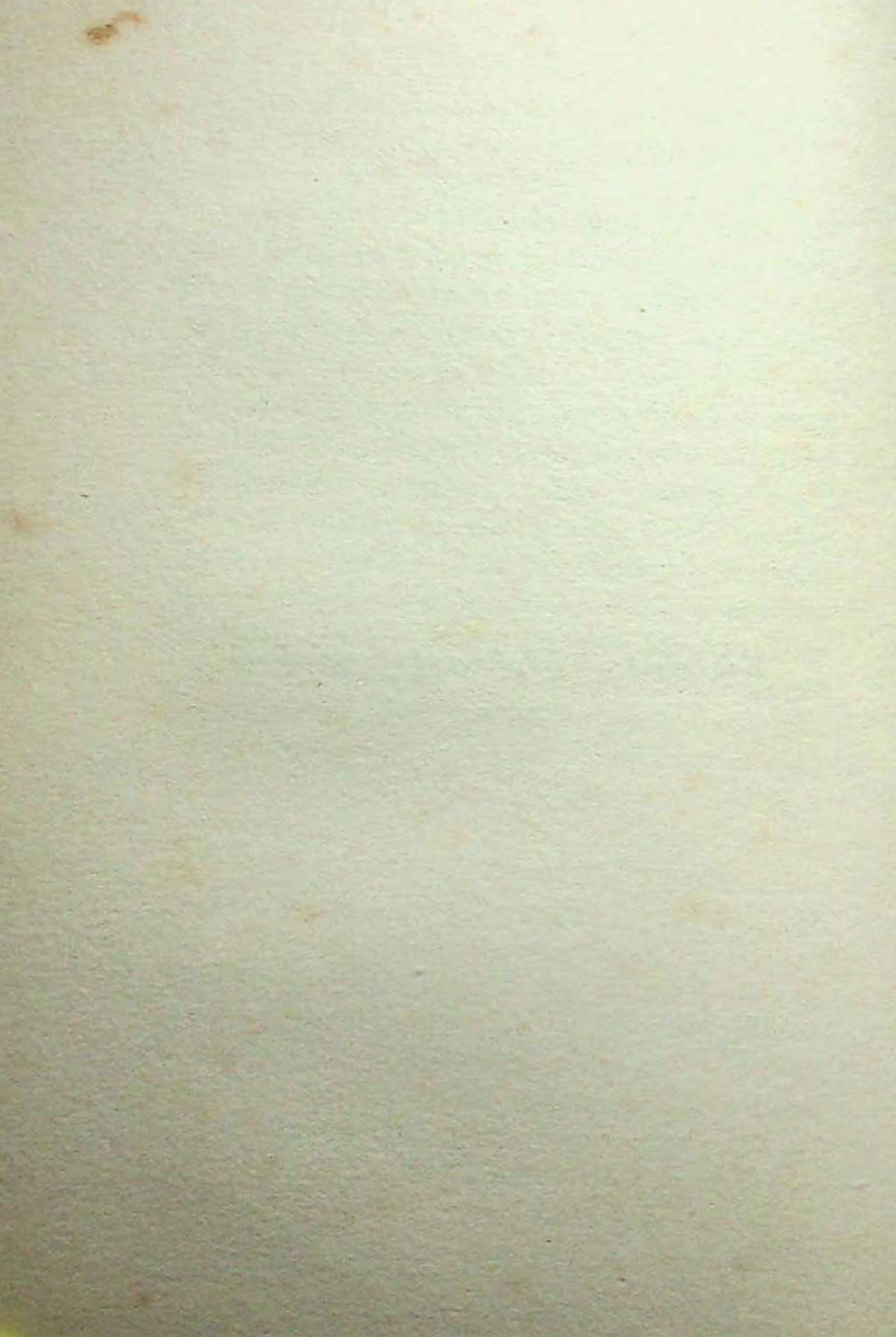
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For she now recollected that Christy had occasionally mentioned an aunt-in-law's sister, Mrs. Toole, who lived near his father's farm at Barnamweel. Evidently Christy had commissioned her to buy the jewelled shamrock brooch, and as evidently she would have done so only for Minnie's interference. In fact Minnie had "as good as made a present of it" to Annie Morrissy, for whom, truth to say, she had "neither love nor liking." A more thoroughly mortifying result there could not well have been. However, Minnie vowed on the spot never again to tamper with prices. So her experience did not fail to point a moral.



“Καὶ ἐχθροὶ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου οἱ οἰκιακοὶ αὐτοῦ.”







## *A Short Loan*

ONE autumn day a great piece of good luck suddenly befell Jimmy Ryark, who was errand boy to a small shopkeeper in the country town of Loughkillen. He learned that he had been awarded no less than a ten-pound prize at the Intermediate Examinations, at which he had competed a few months before. His success came quite unexpectedly to him, because he had persuaded himself that he "was after making a woeful botch of the whole affair," the conviction being based on his references to certain textbooks, in which he had anxiously looked up the correct answers to several dubious questions, with far from encouraging results. The pursuit is one in which many a bad quarter of an hour has been spent by the apprehensive crammed, much to fears inclined, and finding confirmation dire on familiar pages, often thumbed in vain. At Jimmy's home on the edge of the big bog away beyond Drumquilty, the event seemed



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even more surprising, inasmuch as his cousin and fellow candidate, Jack Langan, who had been quite confident of having "done real grand," now proved to have not even secured a pass-certificate.

It was on a wildly wet morning that the news reached Jimmy, and all through the day he splashed to and fro among the wind-ruffled puddles in the grey-gloomed purlieus of Loughkillen, with brilliant visions dazzling his inward eye. On the following Sunday, however, the whole country-side basked serenely in clear September sunshine, as he started by rail for Drumquilty, treating himself to the trip on the strength of his newly acquired wealth. By this time he was in actual possession of his prize. Partly in one-pound banknotes, and partly in silver, it swelled a leather pouch, the unwonted bulk and weight of which he found delightfully perceptible in its safe pocket. Never had he met with a travelling-companion more to his mind. Not that his rejoicing was by any means selfishly personal. In fact, a forecast of the various good turns that he would be able to do "themselves at home" had a very large share in kindling his glow of gladness, and was probably at



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## *A SHORT LOAN*

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the bottom of it all. Yet undoubtedly the brightest flame into which it soared up was the sense that he could now carry out a cherished plan of his own.

This project was nothing less ambitious than the taking of a quarter's lessons in type-writing and shorthand, thereby to qualify himself for a situation promised him at the New Year could he acquire those accomplishments. It was a really splendid clerkship, opening out what seemed to him unlimited prospects of rising in the world ; a chance which it would be a thousand deplorable pities to let slip away. About two pounds would provide for the evening classes, and some other incidental expenses ; so he resolved to retain that much of his prize, at any rate, for this purpose, hardening his heart, and stiffening his backbone against foreseen claims with the knowledge that in such a post he would become a helper far more efficient than he could ever be in his present hopeless drudgery.

" But sure if them crathurs look the length of a standing-lep before them, 'tis the most they're apt to do. They haven't as much wit among the whole of them as 'ud keep a frog hopping straight," he reflected with tolerant



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candour, the outcome of many observations made amid his large domestic circle.

His meditations engrossed him along all the dozen miles of his railway journey. It was a new line, which for the present stopped at Drumquilty, close by the wide bog, where the passenger seems to alight in a pathless region. But Jimmy at once struck into that almost imperceptible crease across the brownish level which he knew would bring him soonest to the cluster of gleaming white cabins, still hidden by a fold of higher ground. Just before he arrived at the place where they would begin to beckon, he saw advancing towards him his father's sister, Margaret Ashe. Her blue-green plaid shawl, and crimson skirt, her black-browed grey eyes, and hands busily twinkling the four needles in a dangling heather-coloured sock, were a pleasant sight to him, since his aunt and he were life-long good friends.

He called the meeting a piece of luck, an opinion which he presently had to recant in silence. For at the very beginning of the interview she requested him to oblige her with the loan of a couple of pounds. This greatly surprised Jimmy, and disconcerted him not a little. Hitherto Mrs. Ashe had always been a



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person of such proudly independent habits that he had never thought of including her among the numerous probable claimants of a share in his riches, with whom he would have to deal. He had indeed counted on her support in resisting the immoderate or irrational demands which experience led him to expect with much confidence. And here she was asking from him, without explanation or apology, a considerable part of his capital. That must, he felt, betoken some pressing trouble of hers, and the inference seemed to admit a cold gust of anxiety from an unusual quarter.

Of course he promptly assured her that she should have the sum and welcome, and immediately handed over to her two crumpled notes, not without a certain amount of unfeigned pleasure and pride at thus rendering her a service, though with no expectation of ever seeing his money again. She had spoken, it is true, of a loan, but he quite understood that repayment might be looked for at "one of those odd-come-shortlies," a date vaguer than *sine die*. He had intended to seek her advice, made valuable by her intimate acquaintance on the spot with all the ins-and-outs of their family affairs. In view of this trans-



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action, however, it now appeared indelicate to talk of financial matters, so he fared on homewards with his spirits slightly dashed.

Nevertheless he did thoroughly enjoy re-joining in such happy circumstances his own many-headed house-party, enlarged by their Langan kinsfolk from next door. His Aunt Margaret had vanished, and his cousin Jack was purposely out away on the bog with the terriers, not being magnanimous enough to face, dimmed with failure, a comrade arrayed in the splendours of triumph. But Jack's mother was prominently and alertly on the scene, nor did she scruple to express herself freely about the ridiculous result of the examination. Her belief on the subject substantially was that "them examiners just joggled up the numbers in a bag, and drew them out anyhow, the same as lottery-tickets"; that "fool or no, one person would as aisy get a prize as another that was belike a dale a better scholar"; and that "Jimmy might very well go halves with poor Jack, who'd be ready to do the same by him, if he'd got any fairity."

From these propositions Jimmy's mother strongly dissented, and she warningly shook her head at him across the room with such



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emphatic energy that her wide-frilled cap was dislodged, and hung down her back by the strings.

There were, however, many other claims awaiting him, which he neither could nor would evade as he did that of Mrs. Langan. The settling of a long-standing account at Finegan's shop made a large hole in his resources, for one thing, and for another, he found it impossible to refrain from the gratification of affording his sisters some finery, and the children a sugary treat. So among them all his pouch was alarmingly depleted ere the end of his afternoon at home.

When the escorting detachment of his brethren had quitted him, to buy sugar-sticks, he sat down on a lichen-dappled boulder, and took stock of his finances. He ascertained that he still owned exactly two pounds and ten shillings, which reassured and satisfied him ; for although larger funds would have been very handy, two pounds would suffice for his grand scheme, and with the ten shillings he could give Granny her choice of a fine present. He was going a long step round, on his way back stationwards, to visit Granny, his father's father's widow. Old Mrs. Ryark, while yet



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"not any great age at all," had unfortunately been "terrible stiffened up in her joints with the rheumatics," which so seriously crippled her that she had resigned the keeping of her little stone box of a farm-house to her eldest son and his wife, shrinking herself into a quiet fireside corner, and a position of no importance. Her grandson Jimmy nevertheless set much store by her, and was looking forward to his visit with all the more pleasure because he knew that she had not yet heard of his success, so that he would himself be the bearer of the good tidings. She would be "real set up," he thought, as he tramped over the wide lonely bog-land, rehearsing the scene of the communication—to his own disappointment.

For Mrs. Joe Ryark, whom he met at the door, reported unfavourably of her mother-in-law's health and spirits. "Not like herself at all she is this week or ten days back. I didn't see her so moped and low in her mind since the time poor Dinny got his death last spring." This "poor Dinny" was an elder brother of Jack Langan, and old Mrs. Ryark's favourite among her daughter's sons. "Fretting she is continual, though the dear knows I dunno what call she has to be, and she with naught to



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do only sit with her hands before her, contint," declared Mrs. Joe, who was a well-meaning and unimaginative person. "But dwindled away she is till the face of her doesn't look the size of a spoon, whatever ails her."

Jimmy soon learned the cause of her grief. Upon his entering the little room, where she sat forlornly huddled in a big chair, she broke into lamentations, moved by the fact that he had grown the living image of his poor cousin Dinny, a deal liker him than Dinny's own brother Jack. "But ah, child dear," she continued, holding him by the sleeve of his home-spun coat, "'twas never in such dacint clothes I seen poor Dinny, God pity him. Scandalous ould rags he did mostly have on him, and sure at the very time he was took, ne'er a respectable stitch he owned."

"A pity it was to be sure," Jimmy said, at a loss for any consoling remark, "but no fault of yours, Granny, anyway."

"'Deed was it not," she assented dejectedly. "What fault would it be of mine, and I that can do sorra the hand's turn these times for him or anybody else? But the lad very belike doesn't know it. That's what I'm thinking bad of. For this many a night he does be



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coming to me in me dreams, with th' ould flitters of clothes hanging on and off him, and he looking at me that sorrowful. Troth now the holes in his brogues is a show ; he might as well be bare-foot all out. 'Tis my belief he has the notion in his mind that I might contrive to be getting a new suit for him again Michaelmas, that's coming on. But och, Jimmy lad, I could as aisy be fetching him King Soloman's jewels, or the Queen of Sheba's. There's naught I can do for him, and that's the whole of it. How would I, and me with ne'er a penny to me name ? Look at the mislucky fingers of me, like bits of twisted sticks. I'm not able so much as to be knitting him a pair of socks, supposing I could come by the yarn itself."

"But sure, Granny darlint, what the better would Dinny be for them, that you need to be distressing yourself about the matter ?" said Jimmy. "With the help of God, he's wanting for nothing in the place where he's gone now."

His grandmother raised her head, and turned upon Jimmy a countenance in which to despondent grief was added a touch of startled dismay. "Is it what better he'd be ?" she



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said, "whethen now, is it a born haythen yourself is, Jimmy Ryark, to be asking what better, supposing his brother Jack was wearing a good new suit of clothes for him, say at Mass on Michaelmas Day, the way poor Dinny'd get the benefit of them, wherever he is?"

Jimmy, taken aback in his turn, did not reply. At the moment of his question he had completely forgotten the existence of that belief about these material wants of the departed, and the means of supplying them, which was still common enough among his elders, a survival from very ancient times, and intercourse with far-off Eastern lands. He now remembered the theory according to which the use of earthly garments could be conveyed to any dead person who had need of them in the other world, if they were worn in public, preferably at Mass, for his benefit, by some one nearly akin, and he knew that it was the custom so to wear them. But he had long since appended this doctrine to a lengthening list of things that seemed to be just "quare foolish ould notions," and tended to slip out of his memory. Notwithstanding, as he perceived instinctively that arguments urged against his grandmother's views would only



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shock and puzzle her, he thought it wiser to keep silence while she continued her lamentations.

"There was me poor father," she said; "before your time that would be, but 'tis like yesterday to me, or this morning early, seeing him setting off to the fair, and he in his knee-breeches, and long stockings, and tail coat, the same as he would have on him all the days of his life. Only when he was about getting himself his last suit of clothes, that he well knew he wouldn't be living to wear out, says he to me poor mother: 'Kitty,' says he, 'here am I the last of all me brothers, and never a one of the ould generation left in it yet, that had a wish to be keeping a respectable appearance on them. And I'm thinking,' says he, 'there isn't any of the young shavers going about nowadays, if it was me son Patsy himself, that would be seen in a dacint pair of breeches, for the sake of man or baste, for 'fraid the lads and girls might rise the laugh on him. So if I'm to have a chance of them being wore for me when I'm gone, all I can do is get me things made the same pattern that all the pig-drovers in the country do be buying out of the raich-me-downs in the City of Limerick.



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‘That’ll maybe content the young jackeens,’ says he; ‘As well be out of the world as out of the fashion.’ So it was that he done, and if he did, he had me brother Patsy wearing it for him no great while after. Right enough *he* was to be sure. . . . But poor Dinny now,” said the old woman, wandering back to her main grief, “how at all’s the crathur to come by what he’s wanting away there? If I had as much as a couple of pounds, I could contrive it for him grand. But where’d I get that, or the one half of it? The bit of money I had saved towards me own burying went for his, that I never thought, God knows, to be seeing; for me daughter Theresa was too hard up altogether last April. ‘Deed then the whole of us do be as poor as the mice in the wall most whiles. Apt I am to be in me clay before ever I get the chance to lay me hands on a couple of pounds.”

Still Jimmy sat mute, although now from no inability to imagine a speech that would most effectually console her. On the contrary, her reiterated wistful mention of a couple of pounds seemed to put the very words into his mouth, so keenly conscious he grew that just this sum was in his pocket. Nothing,



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in a way, could be simpler than the handing of it over to her with a "Here it is, Granny, and welcome." In fact the vividness with which his mind's eye saw the transaction taking place positively scared him. He felt as if something were fumbling with the clasp of his pouch, and at the same time clutching coldly at his heart. For to give up those carefully retained bank notes would be to renounce its dearest wish. Yet as he listened to the plaintive voice, he was aware that he might at any moment yield to an irrevocable impulse. It appeared to him that by tarrying there he was putting in jeopardy all his prospects in life, and he accordingly cut short his most unsatisfactory visit. Evidently this was no time for talking to Granny about presents and prizes; so he went off abruptly with a show of being in a great hurry to catch his train.

As he sped down the narrow path to the gate, he passed close to the window near which her big chair was set, and looking in, he saw her huddled up, a feeble, melancholy figure. She was not watching to see him go by, and to wave farewell, as she would otherwise have done. Her eyes were fixed on vacancy, and her



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lips moved in a muttering to which ever and anon she nodded, as it were, a sorrowful assent.

“Fretting herself to fiddle-strings she is, sure enough,” he thought, running away from the sight, and letting the little gate clap to behind him.

But it did not shut out his trouble, nor did he escape far. Under a massive, dark-ledged furze-bush he sat down to examine once more the contents of his purse, surely not a dangerous proceeding now that nobody except himself was by. How could he foresee that the sight of his two precious notes would arouse in this imprudent person a feeling that to keep them for his own use was a cruel action? Yet so it happened. Then after a few moments a sudden flame of wrath sprang up in his mind.

“If there was any sort of *raison* in it,” he said to himself; “if ’twas aught at all that she really wanted, ’twould be a different thing. But to be throwing them away on this ould, nonsensical tomfoolery, that’s sorra an atom of use to man or mortal—sure, ’twould be annoying entirely; beyond a joke you might call it. Och to goodness, ’tis the quare, foolish notions folk take up with to torment themselves about



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nothing at all. But you needn't trouble yourself to be argufying agin them that haven't got the wit. 'Twas a true word Tim the Fool said, that you might as well be trying to strike a match wid ne'er a head on it."

Perhaps Jimmy himself belonged to that category; certainly nothing in these reflections seemed logically to account for what he did next, which was to jump up from the furzy bank, and bolt back towards his grandmother's house.

Plunging headforemost into her room, he spread out his two crumpled notes on her knee.

"There it is for you, Granny," he said. "Only tormenting you a bit, for fun like, I was all the while, or I'd ha' gave it to you before. Sure amn't I after getting a cart-load of money out of me examination? So there's the price of the suit that Jack can be wearing for Dinny, and don't you go bothering your head about it any more. Kindly welcome you are," he added, feeling while he spoke as if a bad dream had come true.

It was some time before the little old woman fully understood or realised the good fortune that had befallen her, and when she did, her



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amazed delight could at first express itself only in ejaculations. But at last she broke into more coherent raptures.

“Och, thanks be to God, Jimmy machree ; now I can contrive it all ilegant ! There’s Micky Cahill of Coolnafearagh ’ill make as good a suit as heart could wish for one pound ten, and Owen Geraghty over at Mornbeg charges seven-and-sixpence for his boots that do be super-excellent. So that ’ll lave me plenty for a cap and a scarf. Poor Dinny had a great wish ever for a tasty scarf, and some of them was telling me they seen lovely green ones for ninepence with gold harps down below at Tyson’s. Boy dear, he’s made up entirely ! Och, but I’m the lucky woman this day, glory be to God !”

Jimmy did not forgo some thrills of sympathetic pleasure in listening while she thus rang the changes on her joy ; yet through them all seemed dismally to echo the death-knell of his own hope that he had slain. Soon he was glad to make an excuse of the really late hour, and take his second leave. As he glanced in at the window again, he saw that she was occupied in smoothing out the notes on her lap with a thoroughly contented smile, and this aspect



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## DOINGS AND DEALINGS

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of the matter he tried to keep in view on his rather dreary tramp across the bog.

Before he reached the station, the mellow September sunset-tide had withdrawn itself, ebbing far away over the sombre plain, and was bright, in clear gold, only along its rimming ridge of the Knocknieran hills. On approaching the ticket-office, a shed built thriftily out of old sleepers, he fancied that he caught a vanishing glimpse of his Aunt Margaret's face, reflected from the waters of a black bog-hole, into which the shed's small end-window looked ; but he thought he must have been mistaken. " For what at all would bring her trapseing over here ? "

When he got round to the front, however, sure enough, there she was, standing at the door. He would have preferred her absence, being just then in the humour for solitude and regrets.

" Well, Jimmy," she said, " it's a long while you are delaying. What kep' you ? 'Twasn't the load you're carrying in your pocket, anyway, for after being all that length of time off over there, it's much if you have e'er a brass bawbee left."

" A few odd shillings I have yet," said Jimmy,



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## A SHORT LOAN

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"but not a great lot to speak of; the worse luck, if so be you was wishful to borry a bit more," he added, with a deeper sinking of his heart.

"Borrying, bedad!" said his aunt. "The fine fool I'd be to think of any such a thing, and you the best part of the day among them ones at home. I'd be apt to borry as much off an empty nut. No, avic, but it's bringing back your own couple of pounds I am." And with that she held them out to him, a-flutter on the gloaming breeze.

"Why, Aunt Mag, what's wrong with them, and wasn't you wanting them only just now?" said Jimmy, perplexed and apprehensive, indisposed to conjecture anything fortunate.

"Wanting them I wasn't, and I am not," she said, "sorra a bit. All I was intending was to keep them safe for yourself. For don't I well know, Jimmy, the big, soft, good-natured gaby you are ever since the day you were born? A grand scholar you may be, but a grain of sense you haven't got. And couldn't I tell the same as if I was inside you, the way your money'd go, with the pack of them there giving tongue about you? Sure if ould Batt the pony come making a poor mouth to you,



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## DOINGS AND DEALINGS

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it's slinging him pennies you'd be. So says I to meself, 'I'll make it me business to see that he'll have a trifle left, anyway, when he's got quit of them,' I says. And there's your notes, Jimmy, and I only wish I'd took a couple more off you while I was about it."

Jimmy's face lighted up with a reflection from the horizon of his future, where hope was suddenly all aglow once more. "Thank you kindly, Aunt Mag, he said. "It's a great rogue you are, glory be to goodness! Two pounds'll be plenty, and yourself had sense enough for the both of us that time, at all events. I'll be seeing about me classes to-night, I will so, the first thing when I get back, if they're open yet—I'm thinking the train's a trifle late."



“ Refuse thy name.”







## *Namesakes*

ON a rainy August evening Delia Fottrell and Anne Sweeny were in a place where they had no business to be. This might seem natural enough, considering that there was really no place in existence where either of them had any business to be at all; yet the fact would hardly have made Thomas Halpin much better pleased had their occupation of the premises come to his knowledge, as, however, it did not. Indeed so remotely situated was the disused building that its unlawful tenants eluded the notice of everybody concerned except Ody McLagan the ploughman, who passed near it on his way to and from his work. Ody kept his observations to himself. His view was: "Sure them two old wans aren't apt to be doing any great harm. It isn't as if they was a clanjamfry of thieving tinkers with a dozen spalpeens legging it through-other into all manner of divilment about the place, the way you'd as aisy lay your hand on a slippery pinkeen swimming



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## DOINGS AND DEALINGS

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crooked down a stream of water as on a one of them ; and it maybe milking the best of the cows on us in the morning early, before there's as much light out of the sun as would gather itself up to be shining off a tin can. Hard-set these old crathurs are to stump around where the road lies straight before them, let alone lepping dykes and fences. The most they'll be up to, likely, is making away with an odd trifle out of the fields now and again, that's neither here nor there. Bedad, I noticed the stooped one, a while ago, stealing herself a head of cabbage in Little-Five-Acres, and the work of the world she had hacking through the butt of it with a knife-blade the length of me thumb-nail. I thought she'd never contrive to get herself and it hoisted the heighth of the top-bar of the stile ; and not the sinse in her to be pitching it across first. Them few sticks they do be burning's fit for nothing unless pay-stakes, and supposing the old concern went off in a blaze itself, with their bits of fires lighting, Himself has some sort of insurance on it, you may depind. Better than the value of it he'd be getting out of the fire-office, or else malicious injuries — I've no call to interfere with them."



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## *NAMESAKES*

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Acting in accordance with this view of the matter, Ody became discreetly a little blind and deaf whenever he found himself in the vicinity of these two trespassers. Nor were they slow, on their part, to recognise his tolerant attitude towards them. Not that they presumed upon it. They remained fully aware that to be ignored was as much as they could expect, and more, and they duly acknowledged the fact by their deportment. But though they continued to scurry behind bushes, or slip into ditches, at his approach, they did so in a perfunctory sort of way, rather as a polite formality than a necessary precaution. Even when it happened that a shawl inadequately ample had less than half concealed its wearer's booty of greens or roots, there was no really serious alarm. Nevertheless eviction would have been felt as a deplorable blow by Delia and Anne, who were much satisfied with their present quarters, and hoping to keep them at least until late autumn weather made the workhouse an unavoidable retreat.

It had been quite early summer when they first tramped into Gleninagh village, coming from the northward, with all the worldly goods, beyond what they were actually wear-



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## DOINGS AND DEALINGS

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ing, conveyed in a basket, two bundles, and the knotted corner of a blue-check handkerchief. They were richer than usual on account of that corner, for it contained nearly twenty shillings in silver and copper, the balance of a legacy which had a few months back amazingly accrued to Delia Fottrell from an orphan bachelor nephew, the possessor of an unsuspected Post-office Savings Bank book. By the greatest good luck she had chanced to be in Portadown at the very time of his death there, and at the wake had heard tell that an owner was wanted for the money left after burying him ; whereupon, by good luck greater still, if possible, she had succeeded in establishing her claim as next-of-kin. The original sum had amounted to something over two pounds, but part of it had been expended in taking her own and Anne Sweeny's boots out of pawn, and in stocking their basket with an assortment of haberdashery for itinerant sale. This latter had proved on the whole an unprofitable investment, because the basket, unprotected by its American-cloth cover, was inadvertently left within a cabin-doorway, exposed to a pelting shower, which came on while its proprietresses were enjoying the hospitality of the



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## NAMESAKES

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woman of the house, who had made them kindly welcome to cups of "tay" and a rest by her hearth-fire. Dating from that oversight, all the metallic portion of their stock-in-trade had developed a tendency to incipient rustiness, which as time went on increased, with a prejudicial effect on the appearance of their wares. It availed little that Delia spent many an odd half-hour in attempts to polish up the bedimmed pins and hooks-and-eyes with an old rag; nor had Anne more than scanty success when she sought to convince some doubtful customer that their lack-lustre aspect was the result of "just a natural sort of seasoning." Anne generally acted as saleswoman and basket-bearer, being of stronger frame and more stirring habits than her companion, who would often await her return from devious business excursions seated under the lee of some cross-road bank or hedge-row.

Yet it was Anne's health that, breaking down just at the time of their arrival in Gleninagh, obliged them to make an unintended halt. As her rheumatic attack prevented her from putting one foot before the other, they were glad enough that their finances enabled them to rent a tumble-down hovel, even at the ruin-



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## DOINGS AND DEALINGS

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ous cost of two shillings a week, for they would else have had no refuge from the comforts and miseries of the workhouse. August was well advanced before Anne got about once more, and their resources had already come near an end, notwithstanding that Delia had desperately transferred, at an alarming sacrifice, the greater part of their basket's contents to a neighbouring widow Gorman, a small trader, who had her window dressed with one jar of sugarsticks and three clay pipes. So in these circumstances it was fortunate indeed that on the very first occasion when Anne found herself sufficiently "soople" to take "a bit of a streel around," she should have discovered Thomas Halpin's derelict barn, set with out-of-the-way convenience in tramp-alluring solitude, and should have immediately formed her plans for turning the discovery to account. They were executed without delay, or any formidable difficulties. On her recovery Anne had lost no time in resuming the position of predominant partner, which she had occupied ever since she and Delia Fottrell "took up together," more than a dozen years ago, having met by chance in Belfast workhouse. Delia's accession of wealth, and Anne's incapacitating



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## NAMESAKES

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illness had for the time being inverted their relationship in the alliance; but Anne now promptly replaced herself at the head of affairs, and her first proceeding was a move to the barn. Under her management the flitting was accomplished with secrecy and dispatch, in a Saturday evening's dusk, just after they had paid their week's rent. For the last two or three days they had sedulously "put it about" that they were "stepping along with themselves Maryborough ways," and the few neighbours who witnessed their departure down the shadowy lane supposed them bound for the Queen's County.

During their joint rambles it had not seldom befallen them to lodge in some such furtive fashion, but never before had they considered themselves so comfortably established. The old barn did really weather-fend them, such a large proportion of its roof being water-tight that they could dodge drips and puddles, even under the heaviest rain. It had a chimney, beneath which spread a flagstone, whereon pigs' food used to be boiled, while a few perches distant outside lay the wreckage of two or three portly trees, felled years back by a big wind, and still an almost untouched source of abund-



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## DOINGS AND DEALINGS

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ant firewood. In one corner was piled a small heap of hay, left there because its inferior quality had made it not worth removing; but, musty and tussocky as it might be, a few armfuls of it, covered over with a couple of the worn-out sacks, likewise abandoned on the grounds that they were "good for nothing unless coarse sieves," furnished a couch as luxurious as the heart of any old tramping woman could reasonably desire. A potato-field and a cabbage-field adjacent were easily accessible to predaceous raids; and, yet more important, a wet ditch quite close by yielded a supply of water, which if warily scooped, without stirring up the murky mud at the bottom, added no very pronounced flavour to the tea stewing blackly in the sedentary tin saucepan.

They had much need, it is true, of all these advantages, for their means of procuring such necessities as, say, "a grain of tay" were dwindling rapidly. By the rainy evening above-mentioned the little remnant of their capital had shrunk to a single sixpence, and the fact made Anne resolve that she would start on her rounds again next day, if it was not "too outrageous wet entirely." With this in view



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## NAMESAKES

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she took stock over-night of what goods she could put on the market, and found them to comprise three pink papers of tarnished pins ; as many cards of linen buttons, with frequent gaps in their rows ; two penny dream-books ; and five spools of black cotton, bearing the very fine numbers which nobody ever wanted. Clearly she must fix her hopes on meeting with benevolence rather than strictly business principles in the persons whom she might visit. Her ignorance of the unexplored district caused her to set off with expectations modest and vague ; before long, however, it became apparent that she was experiencing more than average success. So at least the stay-at-home Delia inferred, judging by the fine things that were brought back in the basket. Guess was all she could do, as Anne, never communicative, now maintained an unusually reticent attitude about her takings. "Money she's bound to be getting off some of them, that's sure," Delia argued, seeing that besides the broken bread and miscellaneous scraps, received no doubt at kitchen doors, Anne ever and anon returned fraught with neat bluish packets of tea and sugar, and occasionally even with a sizeable brown-paper parcel of bacon. These com-



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## DOINGS AND DEALINGS

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modities betokened purchases at the shop, and hence the command of coins; for "where would the likes of us be getting credit?" Though it would have gratified Delia's natural curiosity to learn how they had been come by, she knew Annie well enough to understand the inadvisability of cross-questioning; so she partook with wise passiveness of the fare provided, and at length Anne voluntarily entered on the desired explanation.

It was one evening about six weeks after the resumption of her rounds, when they both were supping on a bit of bacon and half a head of cabbage, boiled happily together. The air, wafted in at the doorless doorway, had a touch of early frost, which made the fire-warmth pleasant, and Delia, squatting low on a hay-bundle, observed regretfully that there wouldn't be much more cabbage got out of the near field, where they had the crop mostly pulled. "But, sure, the bacon," she added, "does be grand by itself." To this Anne, who was seated more loftily on an old packing-case, rejoined significantly: "Bedad then, grand or no, little enough of it 'ud come our way, if there wasn't people about owning less wit than money." As queries were obviously invited, Delia said:



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## NAMESAKES

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“Is it buying th’ old conthraptions off you they are?”

“Buying in me hat!” Anne replied figuratively. “’Tis a sort of play-acting and letting-on themselves has a fancy to be paying their sixpences for—or else shillings.” Delia’s imagination suggested no further conjecture, so she only stared expectantly, and Anne continued: “The way of it first happening might be a month back—am I after telling you?” The inquiry was merely rhetorical, Anne being quite aware that she was not. “Passing the time of day I was to the postman at the gate of a biggish place beyond the railway line, that I’d never tried, when a carriage druv in with a middling old lady, and says he to me: ‘Mrs. Carroll herself that is; a very charitable lady to the poor.’ So in I stepped to be looking around; and if I did, standing at the hall-door she was yet, when I come up to the house. Just about spaking to me she was, only somebody inside let a screech to *Aunt Anne*, and with that she called back she’d be coming directly. But the next thing she said was axing me me name, and where I lived. So says I to her: ‘Sure now, melady, meaning no offence, me name’s the very same as your ladyship’s own;



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## DOINGS AND DEALINGS

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but as for where I do be living, that's according as I get the chance,' says I. 'Is it Anne Carroll you are then?' says she, taking me up quick and plased like. ''Tis the first time I ever met with a namesake, old woman as I am,' says she. That's how she put the words right in me mouth, for all I was thinking of was the Anne. But no call had I to be contradicting her, and all I said was that she might meet with plenty more namesakes yet, for any old age I seen on her, and dacinter ones they were apt to be than an old *pleebyan* like meself. Hearty she laughed at that, and gave me a sixpinny, and said she was in a hurry that time, but if I called round of a Saturday, she'd see there'd be some trifles left for me. And 'deed now, better she was than her word. For a good share of half-loaves, and the full of the little can of skim-milk, and a sixpinny along with them, I do be getting there every week, as regular as the sun rising. And 'Good morning, Anne Carroll' it is with her whenever she sees me.

"Whist, woman; I haven't the one half of it told," Anne continued, waving off an interruption, as Delia showed signs of beginning to speak. "A couple of days after



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## NAMESAKES

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that, I turned in at the post-office below, to try would the girl there take a dream-book ; and a youngish lady was in it, discoursing to the post-mistress at the inquiry window. About some sort of accident it was, and says she : ‘ Oh, no, Miss Clarke, me sister Norah, Mrs. O’Shaughnessy, it was that got threw out, and wranched her ancle ; but it’s mostly all right again. She’s outside in the trap ’—and so I seen her, holding the pony. ‘ I’m leaving Moyle Cottage to-night,’ says she, ‘ but me sister’s staying on till after Christmas.’

“ ‘ Well and good,’ thinks I to meself. ‘ Now I’m after getting Mrs. O’Shaughnessy’s front name, I might handy try whether she by any odd chance had a fancy for a namesake too ; and if she hasn’t, there’s no great harm done.’ So the next time I was passing Moyle Cottage, that’s a long step off on the other side to the railway, Herself I seen walking a trifle stiff along the shrubberies, and in I landed with me basket. ‘ I wasn’t wanting anything to-day,’ says she to me, civil enough ; and says I to her : ‘ Sure now, melady, wishful I was to be spaking a word with your ladyship, by raison of hearing tell there’s the same name on your ladyship and meself, that am old Norah



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## DOINGS AND DEALINGS

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O'Shaughnessy,' says I. 'Norah O'Shaughnessy?' says she, a bit took aback like, 'but to be sure it might aisy happen in the case of a clan-name.' 'Tis the quare counthry Ireland 'ud be, melady,' says I to her, 'without plenty of O'Shaughnessys, high and low. And about the top of the whole of them your ladyship's apt to be, unless I'm much mistook, and I at the bottom of them, anyway.' 'Indeed, then,' says she, 'belonging we are to the ancient branch of the family, and as a matter of fact, me husband's title by rights is The O'Shaughnessy of the Sea-Beaches.' 'And yourself has every look of it, melady,' says I. 'Whethen now, 'twill do me heart good to be considering there's a Norah O'Shaughnessy living in grandeur, when meself's streeling around, or else wondering how soon I'll be put out on the roadside without a brass bawbee to me name.' So with that if she didn't give me a two-shilling piece; and it wasn't for want of having a single shilling either—I seen a couple in her purse. And she bid me call in if ever I was wanting help to keep the roof over me head. Glory be to goodness, it's no need *this* old roof has of patching with shillings, so to say, but mighty handy they come in for the



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## NAMESAKES

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tay and such, and many a one she's paid out to me, real *flahool*, in the opinion I'm Norah O'Shaughnessy, over and above the sixpinnies I do be getting for calling meself Anne Carroll——”

“Of all the liars !” said Delia.

There was nothing necessarily offensive in the wording of this brief comment. On the contrary, indeed, it might have been so uttered as to express clearly admiring approbation.

Delia's tone, however, quite unquestionably conveyed strong disapproval, which Anne hastened to resent. “Call your liars about yourself, me good woman,” she said, instantly firing up, “and you'll find plenty to call. Troth and bedad, if there was no worser lies telling than them, we'd get along right enough.”

“It's no sort of thing to be doing at all,” said Delia ; “in *my* humble judgment, calling yourself out of your own name, the way people does in the police-courts, and they after getting into trouble. No dacincy there is in it.”

“Fine and dacint we'd be belike, with not so much as a grain of tay to put in the pot,”



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## DOINGS AND DEALINGS

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Anne said, and clenched the argument by drinking noisily and defiantly from a tin canister-lid.

“And found out you’ll be presently, to the back of everything else,” Delia pursued; “aye will you, as sure as you’re sitting cocked up there. For the one of them ’ud be bad enough, but two of them together’s beyond the beyonds entirely, if yourself was twice as scheming; you couldn’t tell the minyit you’ll be caught.”

“Well, and so supposing?” said Anne. “That won’t hinder me of getting the benefit betwixt and between times; and no worse off I’ll be than I was before.”

“Oh, won’t you not?” said Delia; “and you liker than not took up on a charge of false pretinses.”

“Blathers!” said Anne.

“A man I knew of up in the county Cavan,” said Delia, “going about with a little pink-coloured card collecting pennies; and six months hard labour he got for signing a wrong name to it. I seen it on the papers. Scandalous, the magistrates said he was.”

“Scandalous or no,” said Anne, “it’s uncommon ready yourself is to be”—she had



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## NAME-SAKES

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begun with the intention of taunting her companion with partaking of the bacon ; but as she instinctively felt that this was unmannerly, she turned the sentence into : " to be meddling with what's nobody's concern except me own."

" Bedad, then washing me hands I am of the whole matter," Delia protested : " art nor part in it I'll not have. Long sorry I'd be. Go your own ways, and don't be blaming me if one of these fine days the pólis is landing in here looking after you. I've nothing to say to it good or bad." Delia symbolized her disassociation by gathering up the sacks on which she had been seated and withdrawing to her corner for the night.

" Plase yourself and you'll plase me," Anne called after her, and made a show of finishing her own meal with much unconcern.

This conversation was followed by the setting in of a marked estrangement between the allies Delia Fottrell and Anne Sweeny, otherwise Anne Carroll, otherwise Norah O'Shaughnessy, so that a glum dumbness thenceforward pervaded the atmosphere of their barn. Anne did go her own ways as usual, and continued to bring home luxuries bought with the proceeds



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## DOINGS AND DEALINGS

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of her imposture. But no matter how savoury was the cooking of the bacon, or how strong the brewage of the tea, Delia ostentatiously munched dry heels of loaves ungarnished even with butter, and would drink only of the penurious haporths or penn'orths on which she expended the dwindled remnant of her inheritance. Though Anne would not for worlds have "let on" that she noticed, her better fare in reality lost all its savour, and for any gratification she derived from it she might as well have flung it into the ditch outside the doorway. That is what she would have liked to do with the ample share which she used at first to leave ready for Delia, only to see it contemptuously ignored; but such extravagance could not be seriously contemplated, and with much mortified chagrin she set it aside for her own future consumption. Her feelings were on one occasion slightly relieved by fishing out a small cabbage-head, which Delia had put into the saucepan, and tossing it haughtily away, with the remark that it was an "ugly brash."

These strained relations persisted throughout several weeks, during which the trespassers remained in possession of Halpin's barn,



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## NAMESAKES

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neither intrusive peelers nor impossibly rough weather arriving to evict them. Fine and mild was that autumn. The wind which drifted a few crisp, brightly stained leaves across their threshold brought no rain nor biting frost. Day after day the amber and golden sunsets of the year's last month save one lighted Anne home dry shod with her fraudulently gotten gains. She often said to herself that if Delia Fottrell wasn't the contrariest old woman in Ireland, they might both of them be as comfortable there as a couple of trouts under a bank. "But what can you get," she as often added, "from a hog but a grunt?"

Yet Delia, her contrariness notwithstanding, was destined to prove in some measure a true prophet. The fulfilment of her sinister predictions came about thus. One rather uncertain-looking afternoon late in November, Mrs. Carroll called upon Mrs. O'Shaughnessy at Moyle Cottage, and in the course of the visit chanced to look out of the drawing-room window. "I declare," she said, "here's my old namesake, Anne Carroll, coming up to the door. It's a long walk for the poor old soul, as I believe she lives somewhere quite at the other side of Gleninagh."



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## DOINGS AND DEALINGS

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Mrs. O'Shaughnessy looked out too. "Oh, but that's *my* namesake, old Norah O'Shaughnessy," she said. "I suppose she's in difficulties about her rent, which I often pay for her on the strength of her being one of our clan."

"But I assure you, my dear Mrs. O'Shaughnessy," said Mrs. Carroll, "this old woman has been coming to The Grange every week for broken bread all through the summer; I often see her myself, so I can't be mistaken. And she tells me her name is Anne Carroll."

"How extraordinary!" Mrs. O'Shaughnessy said. "There must be something queer about it. Perhaps it would be well if we both went and spoke to her now."

The two ladies accordingly went to the hall-door; but they did not succeed in obtaining the interview they proposed. Just as they emerged, Anne Sweeny, half-way up the drive, became aware of the Grange phaeton waiting in front of the house, and she immediately surmised the occurrence of what she had been unavowedly dreading ever since Delia's disregarded warning: she had come upon both her duped benefactresses together. Presently this fear was confirmed by their appearance at



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## NAMESAKES

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the door, nor did she stay to confront them, but wheeling round made for the gate at her fullest speed, with a deaf ear turned to calls, ominously mingled: "Come back, Norah O'Shaughnessy"—"Stop, Anne Carroll."

She did not, in fact, halt again, or even much slacken her hurried pace, until she reached the barn. By this time a steadily wet evening had set in, and Anne splashed to the door through large puddles, with lumps of stubble-pierced clay adhering to the leaky soles of her boots, while the rain dripped sieve-wise through her empty basket. Delia, who was sparingly feeding the fire with damp sticks, at first attributed her flurried entrance and heated panting aspect to her hasty run in "from under the teems of rain"; but by and by, noticing the absence of Anne's usual Saturday purchases, and the persistence of her perturbation, she concluded that something more untoward must have happened. She ventured on no inquiries, however, and Anne, gloomily drying herself at the unsatisfactory flickers, said nothing at all. So the two old women, having supped meagrely, withdrew in silence to their lairs among the hay.

That silence was broken next morning, for



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## DOINGS AND DEALINGS

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when Delia woke, the first sounds she heard were moans and lamentations uttered by the voice of Anne. Every joint in her body, she said, was creaking with rheumatics, an eye she hadn't closed all night, and hand nor foot she couldn't stir. Surveying her with commiseration, Delia thought that she did look "quare and bad," and forgetful of their long estrangement, hastened to make her a cup of hot tea from a scanty store. Despite repetitions of this remedy, the only one at their command, Anne continued to grow "quarer and worser" all through Sunday, and by Monday her condition seemed to Delia so alarming that she had seriously to contemplate calling in the Dispensary Doctor. Still, as she knew that this step would involve their being at once ordered off into the workhouse, she sought to postpone it as long as possible. Then a thought struck her, and after a struggle with pride and principle she communicated it to the invalid.

"See me here, Anne," she said, "there's not the black of me eye left in this place at all—tay, or a crust of bread, or anything. So I was thinking the best I can do is to be stepping along with meself and try will the Mrs. Carroll you had the talk of give us a bit of help. Sure



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## NAMESAKES

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now if I told her 'twas old Anne Carroll—goodness forgive me—was took sick, she'd be apt to send you——”

Delia stopped short as Anne raised herself up, and fell back on the hay with a shriek, partly of terror and partly of anguish caused by the sudden movement. “Is it a mind to be destroying us, woman, you have?” she said. “Going there to stir them up, and bring the pólis in on top of us, and me not able to turn meself round.”

“What talk at all have you about the peelers, woman alive?” said Delia. “Sorra the call they have to be meddling or making with us, that are as paiceable and dacint as anybody they'll get in Ireland. Belike it's just raving mad you are, and light in your head,” she added reassuringly.

“After finding me out they are making fools of them, the way yourself said they would. Raging agin me they're bound to be, and looking about to find out where I am. And sure that might contint you,” Anne said wildly, “without doing your endeavours to be setting them on me, as if they was so many terrier dogs, and I a rat in a trap.”

“Whist-a-whist, woman dear,” said Delia,



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## DOINGS AND DEALINGS

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“ne’er a bit of fear is there. Divil a foot will I be setting next or nigh them. Within an ass’s roar of them I won’t go,”

Promises such as these had to be reiterated many times before Anne was in any degree pacified, but at last she did fall into a feverish, uncomfortable sleep. Then Delia resumed her intention of going out. Her only alternative, indeed, was to stay there, growing hungrier and hungrier, until Anne should waken to find nothing better than a drink of ditch-water. How and where any sort of supplies were to be obtained, Delia could but vaguely conjecture. Past experience had led her to believe that she was not very likely to fail in procuring at least a sup of sour milk, or a few tea-leaves from which something you could “give the name of tay to” might still be extracted; and in the hope of this humble beverage she started on her quest.

It was cold, blustery weather, and she made slow progress in the teeth of a wintry wind, because a weakness in her back, which had grown upon her for some years past, diminished her walking powers. She shuffled along bowed with a stoop, giving her an attitude of perpetual search. Not far from the village she



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## NAME-SAKES

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reached the end of a lane running at right angles into a main road, and there she saw crossing in front of her a youngish lady, rather tall, dressed in dark blue, with soft-looking grey furs wrapped about her neck and shoulders. Reading a paper as she went, she passed saunteringly out of sight. "Troth now, it's well to be herself in the warmth of them wads," Delia mused shivering. She had left one of her two old shawls at home "to try keep a spark of heat in Anne, the crathur."

Round the corner, she saw the lady again a little way ahead, still moving on slowly, and just at this moment something white slipped out of her hand, fluttering unobserved to the ground. Delia made hobbling haste to pick it up. It was an unopened envelope, addressed in very plain printing letters to: Miss Margaret Moore, Clongorm, Gleninagh. A few steps more, and its owner was made jump by a voice at her elbow saying: "Beg pardon, melady, but might this be belonging to yourself?" Turning, she looked down into the old, peering face, and took the proffered envelope. "Oh, indeed, it is—did I drop it?" she said. "Thank you very much. I should have been so sorry to lose it."



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## DOINGS AND DEALINGS

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Then she seemed about to open it, and go her way, as if the matter ended there. But this was a chill blast, threatening summary extinction to Delia's kindled hope. In a desperate endeavour to shield it she suddenly spoke what appeared to herself wild words. "'Tis your own name that's on it then, melady? Margaret Moore? For so happen me own it is too. Only according to the rest of the writing on the cover the letter was liker to be yours than mine."

"Oh, yes, certainly it is mine," Miss Margaret Moore said, looking rather perplexed, and not altogether pleased at any doubt being thrown on the ownership. "I didn't know that there was anybody else of the name in the neighbourhood."

"Just meself is there, melady," Delia said, "that's apt to be known by it to the end of me days." She somehow conjured up an insinuating smile. "But it won't be so with your ladyship, I'm thinking. No great while will it be until some fine young gentleman's making it his business to get a diff'rnt name fixed on you, melady—and good luck to yourself and his Honour!"

Her namesake wore a smile quite involun-



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## NAMESAKES

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tarily, despite herself, in fact, as her fingers sounded her purse. For the life of her Delia could not help watching, bad manners though she knew it to be, and her eyes lit up gleefully at the size of the silver coin extracted. It was nothing less than a half-crown.

With blessings and thanksgivings that did not soon subside Delia Fottrell took the shortest way to the village shop, where she speedily exchanged her half-crown for quite a basketful of provisions. They included a good little bit of bacon, and a canful of sweet milk "to put in the crathur's tay."

As Delia plodded wearily up to the barn-door through the dusk, she heard Anne groaning within, and found her in an woeful state of body and mind, between acute rheumatism and terror at the apprehended arrival of the "pólis." This latter torment Delia after a time succeeded in removing by dint of assurances that there wasn't a peeler within ten mile of her, every one of them having been sent off to a cattle-drive at a place away beyond Cahir-civeen. Next she lighted the fire, and hastily made some smoky tea, which she had the pleasure of seeing Anne drink greedily. Less happy was her experience when she offered a scrap of



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## DOINGS AND DEALINGS

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the bacon, rapidly boiled, and to her mind smelling delicious. Anne did make a great effort to taste appreciatively the morsels set before her, but, try her utmost, she could not dissemble the loathing with which she turned away from the greasy tin. It was grand, she said, but she couldn't be eating anything. And Delia was very merciful. She contrived, though with no small difficulty, to conceal her chagrin, and said cheerfully: "Sure 'tis too strong food it is for you this evening, woman alive; but by to-morrow, plase goodness, you might be fancying it finely."

"Iligant the tay was, anyway," Anne said remorsefully, feeling herself guilty of ingratitude. Delia, who would have been better pleased to hear some characteristic complaint, at once set about making more tea. "Meself's the notorious old sinner, to be sure," she reflected, considering the means by which she had obtained her materials, "and glad of it I am, all's one." She used them with reckless profusion, for she said to herself with a sinking heart that Anne wasn't apt to be drinking tay any great while longer in this world, the crathur. Visions rose before her of days of forlorn wayfaring, and nights of companion-



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*NAMESAKES*

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less alarm. "Into the House I'll be going me lone, before I'm much older," she thought, "and the Lord may pity the two of us."

She had made once more no false prediction.

THE END



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